

Academic Writing

Syllabus

Requirements:	Open to 4 th -year philosophy students
Course type:	Elective
Instructors:	MODULE 1: Brian McLoone (brianbmcloone@gmail.com; bmcloone@hse.edu;) MODULE 2: Silver Bronzo (silverbronzo@hse.ru) MODULE 3: Aaron Wendland (awendland@hse.ru)
Course website:	http://philosophywritingseminar.wordpress.com

§1. Course Description

This is a course on academic writing in English, specifically designed for philosophy majors. It aims to impart general skills for academic writing in English, as well as to introduce students to the formal conventions and expectations of research papers in philosophy in the English-speaking philosophical community. This is an elective course open to 4th-year philosophy majors. There are no other prerequisites.

§2. Learning objectives

This course aims to:

- Teach students general skills for effective academic writing in English.
- Teach students how to write philosophy papers that accord with the formal conventions and expectations of the English-speaking philosophical community.
- Teach students how to write a four-page prospectus in English for their BA thesis.

§3. Learning outcomes

By taking this course, students will learn to:

- Avoid linguistic mistakes that are common among students whose first language is Russian.
- Write goal-oriented summaries of the views and arguments of other scholars.
- Select relevant quotations and embed them properly in the text.
- Properly refer to the works of other authors and avoid plagiarism.
- Present a philosophical problem and motivate its importance.
- Make sure their paper have a thesis.
- Place their thesis in relation to the views of other scholars.
- Make sure their thesis is supported by arguments.

- Highlight the logical connections between the various parts of a philosophy paper.
- Anticipate objections.
- Write a compelling 4-page description in English of their BA philosophy thesis.

§4. Course plan

MODULE 1			
Meeting	Topic	Readings	Home assignments
1 (3 Sept)	Diagnostic Exam		
2 (10 Sept)	Definite and Indefinite Articles		Take-home worksheet
3 (17 Sept)	Comma Usage		Take-home worksheet
4 (24 Sept)	Comma Usage; Tense		Take-home worksheet
5 (1 Oct)	Mood, Aspect, and Voice		Take-home worksheet
6 (3 Oct)	Register; “I”, “you,” “one”, “his/her”, “they”		Re-write of text distributed in class
7 (8 Oct)	English philosophical jargon; recurring words and phrases; signposting (Day I)		Re-write of excerpt of Descartes’s <i>Meditations</i> (distributed in class)
8 (10 Oct)	English philosophical jargon; recurring words and phrases; signposting (Day II)		Re-write of excerpt of Hume’s argument against rational belief in miracles (distributed in class)
9 (15 Oct)	In-class Exam		

MODULE 2			
	Topic	Readings	Home assignments
1	Introduction to the Five Moves: 1) Problem 2) Motivation 3) Literature Review 3) Thesis 4) Argument	E. Gettier, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?"	Write a summary of Gettier's paper (300-400 words), explaining: a) The view he opposes; b) What is his thesis; c) How he supports his thesis by giving counter-examples. Summarize only his second counterexample ("Case II").
2	Giving counterexamples	Excerpts describing other Gettier cases (distributed in class)	Invent a Gettier Case and present it in a short paper (about 200-250 words). Make sure to spell out <i>why</i> it is a Gettier case.
3	Presenting a philosophical problem		Write a short paper (400-500 words) presenting the problem of free will. Try to render the problem as compelling as possible, without presupposing any knowledge of philosophy. It helps if you imagine that you are trying to explain the problem to a friend who has never heard of it and has never read any philosophy. Try to convince your friend that this is a real problem!
4	Continued		Write a short paper (1-2 pages, double-spaced) in which you present a philosophical problem that you find interesting and gripping.
5	Anatomy of an article	Alexander Nehamas, "Nietzsche, Intention, Action" (<i>EJP</i> 2018), Abstract and Introduction. (continued) Irene Liu, "Ethical Pluralism and the Appeal to Human Nature" (<i>EJP</i> 2018), Abstract and Introduction	1) Consider the abstracts of two journal articles by Nehamas and Liu recently published in the <i>European Journal of Philosophy</i> . To which extend do they answer our 5 questions? And how do they do so? Fill out a table for each paper of the following form: (continued) 1) PROBLEM: 2) MOTIVATION: 3) LITERATURE: 4) THESIS: 5) ARGUMENT: 2) Read the Introduction of Irene Liu, "Ethical Pluralism and the Appeal to Human Nature" (<i>EJP</i> 2018). It consists of three paragraphs. What is the function of each paragraph? Does it address any of our 5 questions? If it does, how does it do it? Give a brief

			<p>summary of each paragraph specifying what is its function and how it fulfills it. Example:</p> <p>“Paragraph #X states the problem of the essay. The problem is that....”</p> <p>“Paragraph #X states the thesis of the essay. The thesis is that....”</p> <p>“Paragraph #X gives a motivation for the essay. The motivation is...”</p>
6	Continued	Avner Baz, “Must Philosophers Rely on Intuitions?” <i>Journal of Philosophy</i> 2012, Introduction	<p>Consider the Introduction of Avner Baz’s article. To which extend does it answer our 5 questions? And how does it do it? Fill out a table of the following form:</p> <p>1) PROBLEM: 2) MOTIVATION: 3) LITERATURE: 4) THESIS: 5) ARGUMENT:</p>
7	Continued	Philippa Foot, “The Problem of Abortion and the Doctrine of the Double Effect”	<p>Write an abstract (100-200 words) for Foot’s paper. Make sure to state her main thesis/es, and the view/s she opposes. Write the abstract in the first person, as if Foot was writing it (“In this essay, I argue that...”) or impersonally (“This essays argues that...”).</p>
8	Literature review: finding your interlocutors	<p>Classroom group activity: Read again the introduction of Avner Baz’s article. List all the literature he mentions. Then write down next to it what Baz has to say (if anything) about each of those works.</p>	<p>This assignment is preparation for your BA thesis. Write a prospectus of your thesis (i.e. a summary of what you intend to do) on the model of the previous assignments. The prospectus should be at least 300 words, but it can be longer. It must address points (1), (2), (3), and (4). Try to address also (5), but it is OK if you don’t have anything to say about your arguments at this stage. If later on you want to change your plan, it’s fine. This is not a contract! Template for the prospectus:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(continued)</p> <p>TITLE: 1) PROBLEM: 2) MOTIVATION: 3) LITERATURE YOU WANT TO ADDRESS: 4) THESIS (OR THESESES): 5) ARGUMENT(S):</p>
9	Outline of BA thesis	No readings. Classroom presentations and peer feedback	

MODULE 3		
Meeting	Topic	Home assignment
1	Prospectus Writing Overview	No assignment
2	Introducing Your Topic	Write an opening paragraph that introduces your topic.
3	Explaining Key Ideas	Write a paragraph that clarifies, explains, or elucidates the central ideas you discuss in your thesis
4	Secondary Literature I	Write a paragraph that describes what a key person in the secondary literature says about your topic.
5	Response to Secondary Literature I	Write a paragraph that explains where you agree and disagree with the key person you discussed in week 4.
6	Secondary Literature II	Write a paragraph that describes what another key person in the secondary literature says about your topic.
7	Response to Secondary Literature II	Write a paragraph that explains where you agree and disagree with the key person you discussed in week 6.
8	Presentation of Your Position/Thesis Statement	Write a paragraph that explains your position on the main topic of your thesis or articulates the point of view you plan to defend.
9	Structural and Methodological Summary	Write a paragraph that describes the layout or structure of your thesis. If you are using a particular method in order to conduct your research, then please include an account of that in this paragraph.
10	Thesis Presentation I	50% of the students are required to prepare and present a completed draft of their thesis prospectus.
11	Thesis Presentation II	50% of the students are required to prepare and present a completed draft of their thesis prospectus.

§5. Reading list

MODULE 1

a) Required readings

The two pieces of required reading are short excerpts from Descartes and Hume. They will be handed out in class and made available on the course website.

No optional reading for Module 1.

MODULE 2

a) Required readings

- E. Gettier, “Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?” *Analysis*, Vol. 23, No. 6 (1963): 121-123.
HSE LIBRARY ONLINE, JSTOR: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3326922>
- Philippa Foot, “The Problem of Abortion and the Doctrine of the Double Effect”(1967)
OPEN ACCESS: <http://www2.pitt.edu/~mthompso/readings/foot.pdf>
- Alexander Nehamas, “Nietzsche, Intention, Action,” *European Journal of Philosophy* (2018). Abstract and Introduction.
HSE LIBRARY ONLINE, Wiley Online Library: <https://proxylibrary.hse.ru:2260/doi/10.1111/ejop.12295>
- Irene Liu, “Ethical Pluralism and the Appeal to Human Nature,” *European Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (2018): 1103-1119. Abstract and Introduction.
HSE LIBRARY ONLINE, Wiley Online Library: <https://proxylibrary.hse.ru:2066/10.1111/ejop.12350>
- Avner Baz, “Must Philosophers Rely on Intuitions?” *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 109, No. 4 (2012): 316-337. Introduction.
HSE LIBRARY ONLINE, JSTOR: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43820705>

b) Optional reading

- P. Martinich, *Philosophical Writing: An Introduction* (Blackwell, 2015).
HSE LIBRARY ONLINE, ProQuest Ebook Central: <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/hselibrary-ebooks/detail.action?docID=2038579>

MODULE 3

No readings for Module 3.

§6. Grading System

MODULE 1		
In-class exam	100% of Module 1 grade	

MODULE 2		
Home assignments	100% of Module 2 grade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You will have to turn in 8 written assignments. • Your lowest grade will be dropped. • The assignments will have equal weight. • Each assignment will be due in class, at the beginning of each class, starting with the second meeting.
Classroom participation	Up to 1 extra point (out of 10) toward the final grade	(For example, if you get a 8/10 on the assignments, but your participation was excellent, you will get a 9/10)

MODULE 3	
Home assignments and their presentation	100% of Module 3 grade

in class	
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The grade distribution across the three modules is as follows:

Module 1: 30% of final grade
 Module 2: 30% of final grade
 Module 3: 40% of final grade

Grades will be assigned according to the 10-point scale adopted by HSE:

ETCS grades		10-point scale	5-point scale
A+	Excellent	10	5
A	Excellent	9	5
A-	Excellent	8	5
B+	Good	7	4
B-	Good	6	4
C+	Sufficient	5	3
C-	Sufficient	4	3
F	Fail	3	2
F	Fail	2	2
F	Fail	1	2

§8. Examination Type

Students will be assessed on the basis of their classroom participation, classroom group activities, home assignments, and an in-class exam. See “Grading System” for more detail.

§9. Methods of Instruction

Methods of instructions will vary from module to module. They will include: a) lectures on academic writing in English; b) classroom group activities; c) classroom discussion of home assignments; d) one-to-one discussion of assignments during office hours.

§10. Plagiarism

To clarify what is plagiarism and how to avoid it is one of the aims of this course. To anticipate, plagiarism is a form of cheating: you commit plagiarism when you take something that somebody else has written and include it in your paper as if it were your own work, i.e. by cutting and pasting. In order to avoid plagiarism, you must properly quote any stretch of text that you take from somebody else—that is, you must place it in quotation marks and indicate its author. Also, you must indicate the author of any stretch of text that you are paraphrasing. **In accordance to the general policy of HSE, plagiarism will not be tolerated in this course. Students who plagiarize will receive a 0 on the relevant assignment.** This will seriously lower their final grade, and may even lead to failing the course. Repeated plagiarism may result in disciplinary actions.