

Guidelines for Philosophy Research Papers: Dr. Daniel's Writing Intensive Courses

1. **Selecting a topic.** Based on your reading or class discussions, choose a topic (e.g., “The Cartesian Circle,” “Berkeley’s Master Argument,” “Hume on Personal Identity”) and have it approved by me. It should be narrow enough to be the proper topic for a 3000-word (roughly 10-page) treatment. A [list of possible topics](#) can be found on the course website.
2. **Developing a Thesis.** Your paper must be based on an examination of at least six or seven secondary sources (commentaries on what your philosopher thinks about an issue). Only after researching the literature will you be in a position to determine how commentators differ in their interpretations and how you might be able to appropriate them in your paper. Good starting points for finding the resources for your paper are the Philosopher’s Index, Phil Papers, and the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Once you read a bunch of the secondary literature on a topic, you will discover that these books and articles will help you locate places in your philosopher’s writings (the “primary sources”) that you in your paper can quote from *and comment on*. In your paper, you should quote mainly from your philosopher’s texts, not from the secondary sources.
3. **Structure of the Paper.** This paper identifies an interpretive issue in the scholarship, compares various options that have been proposed to handle the issue, and proposes a way to reconcile those options. Don’t think of it as an opportunity to agree or disagree with your philosopher’s view. Instead, in your paper indicate how points raised by various interpreters draw on remarks by your figure (e.g., Kant). Your contribution is to show how, drawing on the arguments of interpreters, you can come up with a thesis that accommodates their different insights. In some cases, that means saying something like “to the extent that” your philosopher (e.g., Hume) is talking about a topic (e.g., freedom) in one way, he means X, but “insofar as” he is understood as referring to the topic in a different way, he means Y. Notice how this allows you to express your own definite thesis by highlighting how you qualify your interpretation in a distinctive way. It is this proposal that is your thesis, your contribution to the scholarship. The structure of your paper will thus be as follows:
 - a) after the title (e.g., “Margaret Cavendish’s Doctrine of Mind” or “Anne Conway on God and Nature”), your first page or two should identify the issue with which you are concerned and the questions raised in the scholarly literature on how to interpret the philosopher’s view. Here is where you make explicit your thesis, that is, the specific point you want to make about how to understand and perhaps reconcile the various interpretations, and you should indicate the order of your presentation.
 - b) each section of the paper should have a title and be at least 3-4 pages long. For a 10-page paper, two or three sections are sufficient (in addition to introductory and concluding remarks). A 20-page paper will not necessarily have more sections, just longer ones. Do not title your first few paragraphs: it is obvious that they constitute the Introduction.
 - c) a final brief (less than a page) section, entitled “Concluding Remarks,” indicating how the issues you raise clarify the problems raised by your philosopher and his interpreters.

Writing:

1. Do not begin your paper with empty platitudes such as “For centuries philosophers have argued about what it means to know ...” or “Rene Descartes is considered the father of modern philosophy because ...” Such generalities are irrelevant to the specific topic with which you are concerned.
2. Do not end your paper with empty platitudes such as “No doubt much still needs to be said about this puzzling aspect of Spinoza’s thought, but I hope to have shown that ...” We all know that

you have not said the last word. Better to end your paper simply by pointing out the implications of your discussion and leaving it at that.

3. No need to refer to the first names of classic thinkers (e.g., Rene Descartes, Immanuel Kant) unless there is a chance the figure could be confused for another major philosopher with the same last name (e.g., Pierre Bayle, Margaret Cavendish, Henry More).
4. Don't refer to "philosopher Rene Descartes" or "philosopher Daniel Garber": we assume we are talking about philosophers.
5. Don't cite book/article/essay titles in the text (e.g., in "The Status of Mechanism in Locke's *Essay*," Lisa Downing proposes . . . , or "in *Berkeley's Thought* George Pappas argues . . ."). Instead, either refer to the point the author makes in the body of your text without mentioning the author by name and cite his or her work in a footnote, or say "as Lisa Downing (or George Pappas) notes," . . . and then cite her or him in a footnote.
6. Your essay is an expository exercise aimed at explaining how the points raised by your philosopher are justified and related. It is not an occasion for you to respond with your own feelings of agreement or disagreement. Don't end your essay with an endorsement ("Locke nicely frames the problem") or some attempt to sound profound ("Descartes' scientific work continued to impact thinkers for centuries").
7. Merely average essays will summarize the main points of the commentators. Better essays will relate those points to one another, showing how they are tied together. The best essays will show how commentators complement and expand on one another.
8. Be careful to spell the following words correctly: separate, perceive, conceive, receive, existence, independent, it's (vs. its), infinite, innate, judgment, sensible, persistent, perception, affective (which is different from "effective"), principle (vs. principal), then (vs. than).

Formatting:

1. The paper should have one inch margins and the text should be double spaced.
2. Font should be Times New Roman.
3. Your title (14 pt font) should be centered at the top of the first page, followed by a double space and then your name, the course name, and date on three single-spaced lines. Do not use a separate cover sheet (it wastes paper), then a double space for your first line of text.
4. The text of the body of the paper should be Times New Roman 12 pt font.
5. The first page has no page number or "1" is centered in the bottom margin of the page; subsequent page numbers go in the upper right hand corner margin.
6. The first line of each paragraph is indented 1/2". Note: the symbol for an inch (") is not the same as sign is not the same as a double quote (").
7. Indent quotes longer than three lines 1/2" from the left but not from the right. No quotation marks go before or after indented quotes. Indented quotes should be preceded and followed by an additional half-space line (in MSWord, just do Auto spacing before and after the indented quote).
8. Don't begin or end a quote with an ellipsis (three periods).
9. If you leave something out of the middle of something you quote, insert three periods (with spaces between each) if leave out less than a full sentence, four periods if you leave out more than a full sentence.
10. Use appropriate formatting commands and keys. For example, do not manually type in page numbers or insert footnotes as superscripted numbers. Do not insert a bunch of spaces; instead use tabs or margin markers.
11. Single quotation marks go inside commas, periods, colons, and semi-colons; double quotation marks go outside.
12. Book titles are italicized; articles and book chapter titles should be in double quotes.
13. Footnotes should be 11 pt font and single spaced. Indent the first line of a footnote 0.3".
14. Footnote citations should have the following format:

- (book) Nicholas Jolley, *The Light of the Soul: Theories of Ideas in Leibniz, Malebranche, and Descartes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 32-35. In addition to author and title, you must include the place of publication, publisher, date, and specific pages. [There is no need to use “p.” or “pp.” unless the numbers could be confused with something else.]
- (translator/editor) Nicholas Malebranche, *The Search after Truth*, III.2.6, in *The Search after Truth and Elucidations of the Search after Truth*, trans. Thomas M. Lennon and Paul Olscamp (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1980), 230. [Give internal reference (part, section) after title and page after full citation.]
- (journal article) Monte Cook, “The Ontological Status of Malebranchean Ideas,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 36 (1998), 538-39.
[Do not include the issue number or month of the volume—for example, “81 (4) (December 2000)”—or more numbers than are necessary—for example, “363-384,” when 363-84 is sufficient—unless the page numbers of the journal start from 1 in each issue (which is rare) or you need to include the numbers to avoid confusion. For example, “312-3” suggests that something might be missing; instead, use “312-13.”]
- (essay in book) Steven Nadler, “Intentionality in the Arnauld-Malebranche Debate,” in *Minds, Ideas, and Objects: Essays on the Theory of Representation in Modern Philosophy*, ed. Phillip D. Cummins and Guenter Zoeller (Atascadero, CA: Ridgeview Publishing Co., 1992), 78.
- (internet entry) Sarah Hutton, “Lady Anne Conway,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/conway/>>.

15. Citations of a work referred to in previous notes should list simply the author’s last name and an abbreviated title (for example: Cook, “Ontological Status,” 538).
16. If you cite works by either a primary source (a major philosopher like Descartes or Hume) or a secondary source (an historian of philosophy) more than twice, you should give an abbreviation of the work when you first mention it and in all subsequent citations embed it in the text in parentheses using the abbreviation. For example, when you first refer to or quote from the Cottingham-Stoothoff-Murdoch translation of Descartes’ *Meditations*, give the full citation in the footnote [e.g., Mediation IV in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol. 2, trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch [CSM] (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 41], and in subsequent citations of Descartes insert references to his work parenthetically into the text (not in footnotes): for example, insert into the text “(Med VI, CSM 2: 52).” Your goal is to avoid a list of citations at the bottom of a page that could be inserted into the body of the text.
17. If you end a sentence with a parenthetical reference, put the period of the sentence *after* the closed parenthesis. The only time this does not apply is in regard to an indented quote, in which case the parenthetical insertion is preceded by the period.
18. You should use standard sources, never anthologies. An anthology is a collection of several different authors (e.g., *Readings in Modern Philosophy*, vol. 1, ed. Arieuw & Watkins), not a collection of writings by the same author (e.g., *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vols. 1-2, trans. Cottingham, Stoothoff, and Murdoch). If you don’t know whether a source is standard, ask me.
19. Use footnotes on each page instead of endnotes at the end of the essay. Footnotes should be inserted using the appropriate key (e.g., in MSWord, References, Insert Footnote).
20. Do not insert footnote numbers in the middle of a sentence.
21. Do not list Works Cited or provide a Bibliography.
22. Insert only one space between sentences, and insert no space between a punctuation mark and a footnote number.
23. Use an em-dash instead of two hyphens for an aside comment—such as this—and an en-dash instead of one hyphen for relating terms (e.g., “the finite–infinite contrast”). To access these dashes, in MSWord go to Insert, Symbols.