

Model Assignment: PHI 231 Why Ask Why Assignment

- Answer the question(s) in **substantially-studied, well-considered, neatly-organized and grammatically flawless** sentences that constitute a couple of, or a few, paragraphs, depending on the scope and structure of the question and requirements that the syllabus specifies. Write clearly and coherently: treat it as a mini-essay. As it is a take-home writing assignment, compositional fineness and citational precision are required.
- **Cite relevant passages** clearly from the designated primary text, i.e., any and all of the reading materials listed in the corresponding unit of the class schedule. The more specific, the better. You cannot obtain more than 50% of the full score, if you do not show the evidence of **studied reflection**, i.e., precisely and insightfully placed citations. A few and no more than ten citations are adequate.
- If you fail to use/study/cite from the primary reading(s) designated or required as such, you will receive less than 20% of the full score.
- If you fail to use/study/cite from the secondary reading(s) designated or required as such, you will receive less than 50% of the full score.
- **Do not ramble.** Try and be as concise as possible, while being informative. Trim all the unnecessary fat, as much as possible; fill the page only with essential and necessary words that are carefully chosen and edited.
- **Do not copy or repeat the question verbatim**, partly or wholly: they are not your words, and they are not part of the word count.
- **Do not “pad” the text**, with redundant or superficial notes. Page fillers will not be simply ignored but noted negatively.

Follow all the steps below while answering/writing.

1. In the excerpt, “Why Ask Why,” there is a descriptive discussion and considered justification of the “Socratic attitude” or skeptical attitude. First, explain its meaning and significance.
2. Then introduce and discuss, at least three, in your opinion, specifically *philosophical* and philosophically interesting propositions: they could be something you’ve read so far for this course, something you yourself came up with, or something we discussed in class. And provide a comparative analysis or evaluation of what it is that makes those sentences philosophical, by also using/citing from at least one more material from the class webpage. Use the four/five branches of philosophy, i.e., metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, aesthetics and social-political philosophy as the guidelines for your choice. You could choose a question from each category or think about questions within one category. Choice is yours. Just make sure you reflect clearly at some length and show the evidence of studied reflection.

RULES: For Each Paper

ADVICE: HOW ABOUT USING THE FOLLOWING AS A CHECK-LIST?

- **Primary Text**

- Unless otherwise noted, study and cite from any articles/books from the class webpage listed as “Read In advance.” If specific instructions are given as to what primary reading is to be used/studied/cited, then that is your primary text on that occasion.
- Show clearly that you have read the designated text or texts of your choice closely and critically; direct, meaningful and well-incorporated quotations from the primary source are required.
- **Secondary Text**
 - Use and cite from at least three sources**: at least one should come from the class webpage. Choose your text either from “Read in advance” or “Supplementary Read.”
 - **electronic journals of minimum academic standards or printed books.
- **Citation**
 - Use the standard academic citational system, whichever style you adopt: APA, CHICAGO, HARVARD, MLA, etc.
 - Seek help from the Writing Center if you do not know how to cite.
 - NB: Any unformatted text will result in the loss of 20% of the score.
- **Title**
 - You must be able to come up with a title that best reflects your thesis.
 - NB: Any untitled essay will result in the loss of 10% of the score.
- **Evaluation**
 - See [Paper Grading Rubric](http://www.kyoolee.net/Dr. Lee's Paper Grading Rubric - Tabulated One-Look.htm). (<http://www.kyoolee.net/Dr. Lee's Paper Grading Rubric - Tabulated One-Look.htm>)
 - Be creative by all means. But be so in addition to being faithful to the instructions; your originality has to be expressed within the formalized parameters of requirements. If you cannot make up your mind about the answer you will be giving (“yes or no, this or that”), what you can do is to show, clearly, the process of your philosophical struggle.
 - NB: You cannot get an A-level grade on this assignment, however brilliant your thoughts are, without fulfilling the stated minimal criteria as laid out above. Remember: you must first try and master the rules in order to be able to break them creatively—later, if and when necessary.
- **Advice on How to Write: An Exercise in “Building” an Argument**

First, review your class notes and discussion. Then, study the reading materials as much, and as deeply, as you can; take notes along the way, while you make your way through the secondary reading material.

1. **[Introduction]** Start your essay by providing the reader with some minimal background information, correlating to the topic or focus of your essay. You are certainly welcome to use my

task-specific “cues” as an *implicit* lead or if necessary paraphrase it, but you cannot just copy it down.

2. **[Main Body]** While moving into the heart of your essay, based on your study so far, try and seamlessly build into your text what other quotable scholars have already said in print regarding what you have to say – this virtual dialogue is essential in academic writings.
 1. **[Break Down Your Points/Thoughts]** It is advisable to use pre-organised, well-organised notes before attempting to write and eventually rewrite this part.
 2. **[Cement Your “Bits” and “Pieces” of Informed Thoughts]** Arrange them in a logical and creative sequence: a mere jumble of notes or thoughts does not deserve academic readership or a reasonably good grade. Remember: you are not collecting notes but writing an essay.
 3. **[Insert anything extra or interesting further points *after* you have established the main line of argument]** Often during composition, a new route of thinking can emerge and, actually, should; in stead of being carried away and getting lost, take note of those as marginal asides and edit them in later, creatively and seamlessly, after you have constituted the main line.
3. **[Conclusion]** Tie your thoughts and show a (syn)thesis, of which the reader is to be reminded conclusively. Elegantly, open up your thoughts to other possible challenges or further development, as well as showing you have done all you claimed you would do at the start of your essay.