

WRITING THE ETHICS TERM PAPER

For earlier drafts of your Term Paper, use the means of writing you are most comfortable with -- pencil, tape recorder, word processor, etc. Do not forget to keep your records of your paper, since these drafts are to be turned in with your Final Paper on Monday, December 8, 2003, by 10:00am. If you are using any form of a word processor, remember to save your work frequently on a diskette; also make backup files on the hard drive and a "spare" backup diskette. **MAKE A PRINTOUT OF EACH DRAFT** showing your revisions.

Since most papers in are thesis papers in some form, you will need to focus on the purpose of a thesis paper, which is to analyze and present a well thought out argument for a particular position. Philosophical analysis of a moral-ethical issue is not the same as stating your sincerely held opinions. Because an ethics paper is not, therefore, a matter of articulating, even very eloquently, a personal opinion, expect to be held to assessment standards that require you to write analytically.

A paper in moral-ethical philosophy consists of at least six (6) parts:

- (1) the introduction,
- (2) the presentation of the arguments,
- (3) the presentation of objections or counter-arguments,
- (4) a response to these objections,
- (5) the conclusion, and
- (6) an annotated bibliography (see section below, "Documenting Sources According to MLA Guidelines")

For a paper of this length, and for any paper longer than 6 pages, it is important to make links between sections, and I urge you to consider using subtitles for different sections of the paper. Subtitles make a paper more readable and they help you focus and re-focus on the direction of your thinking. Subtitles, if accurate, summarize the content of a section; when subtitles do not reflect a concentrated focus on the main point(s) you are making, they point up where the paper is digressing and failing to support the overall momentum of the primary position assumed by the paper's author.

I highly recommend starting somewhere and forgetting about working in a chronological order from the introduction, to the presentation of arguments, ... to the conclusion. Most likely (and this is my assumption), this is the first paper you have ever written for ethics and it should be fun! Start wherever you can. Write out your first arguments, for example. Don't worry about your grammar or spelling in your first draft. What is important is that you articulate some ideas, get them down on paper. You'll be able to revise these thoughts later. Focus first on what you want to 'get out of your system.' Clean up the paper later, several times, if you have to.

I. Introduction

The opening paragraph serves an introduction to your paper. It should contain a thesis statement and an explanation of your thesis. If you're like most people and you don't have entire papers stored in your head, organized perfectly from start to finish, then it's best to do what has proven to work: compose the other sections of the paper first, and come back to (re)write your introduction so that it genuinely reflects what

your Ethics Term Paper is all about.

Your next question, if you are reading this prior to our class discussion of the Term Paper, is what is a thesis?

The ***Statement of Your Thesis*** tells the reader what position or conclusion you are defending in your paper. I recommend that you *not draft your thesis statement until after you have completed your research!* As the conclusion of argument, the thesis statement should evolve as a result of your research; moreover, it is usually best and easiest to work up a compelling introduction only once you have completed the body and conclusion of your paper, odd as that may sound. Think of it this way (if you're still skeptical): if you begin your research with the purpose of defending a particular position, you are very likely to get caught up in rhetoric, and you'll tend to read only those arguments that support your initial opinion, rather than approach the issue with an open mind.

Your thesis statement should clearly state the position you intend to support. Some people who haven't thought through an issue or who fear confrontation and criticism may try to avoid taking an issue by fence-straddling, as in the following statement: "As far as the morality of abortion is concerned, I can see both sides of the issue." This sort of non-committal position may be acceptable as a starting point prior to doing your research, but it is not a thesis statement. Also avoid fatalistic statements such as "Abortion is a controversial issue that will probably never be resolved." This suggests lazy thinking and simply constitutes a means of dismissing an issue. Take the issue you are focusing on seriously. As noted by well-known ethicist Judith A. Boss, people talked in this manner for centuries about slavery. Your goal in the term paper is to critically analyze all the sides of the issue and then decide which position is best.

Explanation of the thesis statement and definition of key terms.

Before you defend your thesis statement, explain what it means. Include a brief summary and explanation of your argument, as provided in the example:

For more complex issues, you may have to inform the reader about the nature of the issue you intend to defend. To cite an example: most people are not clear about what cloning entails or how it is currently being used. Many are also not aware of the purposes and types of tests cosmetic companies perform on animals. Given this lack of general knowledge about some of the important topics you will want to cover in your term paper, it is critical that you make your explanation as concise as possible, presenting only the information necessary for readers to follow your argument.

Define the key terms in your thesis statement.

While most people agree on the definitions of abortion and capital punishment, terms and phrases such as "abortion on demand," "selective abortion," "outing," "euthanasia," "hate speech," "person(hood)," and even words like "right" and "immoral," have several shades of meaning. For some, abortion on demand means that abortion is morally permissible for any reason at any time of the pregnancy;

others who claim to support abortion on demand draw the line at sex selection or abortion for convenience during the last trimester. Similarly, for some people "pornography" includes any sort of nudity, while others define pornography more narrowly as involving violence or coercion against women and/or children. Therefore, explain to your readers how you will be using the critical term(s) in your paper.

Make definitions clear, concise and acceptable to most people.

Clearly defining the key terms and phrases at the outset will help you avoid unnecessary verbal disputes. The definition, "sentience is the capacity to experience pain and pleasure," for example, is clear, concise and the one used by most people, including philosophers. Defining "hate speech" as "saying hurtful things," by contrast, is much too vague, as well as too broad to be useful in a philosophical analysis of the issue. Find a definition that most experts on the issue find acceptable. Since I recommend you employ the definition adopted by most experts in the field, I expect you to cite the source(s). Whatever definitions you use for your key terms, make sure you use them in a consistent manner throughout the paper.

II. Presenting Arguments to Support the Thesis

The arguments supporting your thesis make up the greater part of your paper. In presenting your arguments, use only premises that are logically compelling. Remember, the purpose of your paper is to convince the reader, in this case your professor (me!), to accept your thesis.

Make a list of possible arguments.

This list, to be revised and shortened, can be expanded into paragraphs in later revisions. Don't worry about the exact wording just yet; just get your ideas down. Do not limit your arguments to one philosophical tradition. One of the purposes of the Ethics Term Paper is to demonstrate that you have an understanding of how the different moral-ethical theories apply to moral-ethical issues. Jot down notes regarding both empirical and theoretical support for these arguments. This will help you choose the best arguments.

lity).

Choose the strongest three or four arguments that support your position.

Numbers three and four in the preceding list can be eliminated. Number three is based on the fallacy of popular appeal, and number four is irrelevant to your argument; however, numbers 1, 2, 5, 6, and 7 look promising.

Do not repeat arguments.

Each argument should be different, not a rehash of an earlier argument. Do not reword earlier arguments and present them as new arguments in order to make the paper longer (cheaters!). Such tactics are guaranteed to irritate your prof. who has to waste valuable time reading the same argument twice. Examine each argument on your list. In the preceding list, for example, numbers 1 and 7 are in essence the same argument and should be combined.

Do not get sidetracked by presenting expert opinion or materials from other disciplines.

Don't go off on tangents about the legal status of abortion, pornography, or get into sociological studies on the prevalence of this phenomenon or that, as interesting as these tangents might be. Remember: this is a paper in ethics (moral philosophy, to some extent), not in law, psychology, sociology, or politics.

Clearly state the premises in each argument.

The premises of each of your arguments will consist of both moral principles and empirical statements. In presenting premises based on moral theory, state which principles, duties, and/or rights are involved. Sensing (S) personality types tend to neglect theory. Do not limit yourself to one philosophical tradition; draw from as many of the universal ethics theories, such as deontology, utilitarianism, rights ethics, or care ethics. Avoid cultural relativism (the theory that different societies or cultures have different moral codes; a descriptive theory) and ethical subjectivism (theory that claims that your moral behavior is right simply because you believe it; there are no shared, or intersubjective, beliefs), however; both are weak moral theories that are rejected by the great majority of moral philosophers.

Do not make claims you cannot support.

This is most likely to happen with Intuitive (N) personality types who tend to assume that their claims are intuitively true. If you use empirical facts to support your claim make sure you can back them up with reputable sources. For example, if you claim that capital punishment is morally acceptable because capital punishment acts as a deterrent, you must have facts that show that capital punishment does have a deterrent effect. If you are arguing for selective abortion, do not simply assume that people born with disabilities or children of the "wrong" gender would rather not have been born.

Do not put more than one argument in a paragraph.

If each argument is more than a paragraph long, you may want to number the arguments. The opening sentence of each paragraph should contain a summary of the argument and definitions of ambiguous key terms that have not already been defined in the introduction to the paper.

Begin by making a list of premises for each argument.

Put any thoughts you may have about each premise in parentheses after the premise. Don't worry about the exact wording just yet. It is more important for you to get your ideas down first.

Avoid the use of inflammatory language.

How we say something is as important as what we say. In presenting your arguments, use neutral language as much as possible. Referring to capital punishment as "state sanctioned murder" does not promote rational discussion of opposing positions. Similarly, calling people who experiment on animals "sadists" does little to create an atmosphere in which these issues can be openly discussed. Also avoid sexist, racist, ethnocentric language.

Check your arguments for logical fallacies.

After you have completed a draft of your paper, go back and check your arguments

for fallacies. If you are unsure of what the fallacies are, review the section that I will hand out to you, focused exclusively on logical fallacies. If you find that your arguments contain fallacies, get rid of them, no matter how convincing they may sound to you. They are only going to weaken your overall argument.

Ask yourself if your premises really do support your conclusion.

For example, the premise, "human life is sacred, or has intrinsic moral worth" may mean two different things in the context of euthanasia. To one person it implies that humans should be kept alive, as long as possible. To another person, it implies that humans should have the right to choose when to terminate their lives. In this case, you may want to add additional premises regarding the meaning of intrinsic moral worth. Thinking (T) personality types are good at logical analysis, but they have a tendency to leave out premises, assuming that they are self-evident. Feeling (F) types, on the other hand, tend to substitute personal experience for analysis. In checking over your arguments, be aware of the weaknesses associated with your personality type.

Apply the reasonable person criteria

This criteria is also known as the "test of publicity." In applying this criteria, ask yourself if a well-informed, reasonable person would be convinced by your arguments. If you are unsure of the answer, try out your arguments on someone. Then go back and polish your arguments.

Polish your arguments.

In your final draft, your premises and arguments should not be in list form. Eliminate any fallacies, inflammatory language, or weak arguments before you begin the final draft of your paper. Make each argument as concise as possible. Eliminate any redundant or superfluous words and phrases. If the argument you are presenting overlaps with another argument, simply mention that you will be elaborating on the other argument later in the paper. Start out with your strongest, and longest, supporting argument. In presenting the first argument, begin with a summary of your thesis statement as well as a conclusion of your first argument. Then give a summary of the premises for the argument in the following draft:

Argument 1. *Cosmetic experiments on sentient animals are wrong because they cause unnecessary pain.* The moral imperative to avoid harm or pain is fundamental to systems of moral philosophy throughout the world. According to utilitarians, pain is the greatest evil and pleasure the greatest good. The principle of utility states that we should minimize pain and maximize pleasure for the greatest number. In both Buddhism and Taoist philosophy, the duty of ahimsa requires us to avoid harming any living beings. The duty of non-maleficence in deontological theories also states that we should avoid doing harm. Although most deontologists, such as Immanuel Kant, do not extend this consideration to non-human animals, I will argue in this paper that this duty should be extended to certain non-human animals, such as rabbits.

As sentient beings, rabbits are capable of feeling pain. Many of the cosmetic tests are extremely painful. For example, the commonly used Draize test involves putting potentially toxic substances in a rabbit's eyes. The Draize test is so painful that rabbits will sometimes break their backs attempting to escape the excruciating pain.

According to utilitarians, causing pain may be morally justifiable/justified if it is

the only means to bring about a greater good. However, the pain caused to rabbits and other sentient beings by cosmetic experiments is unnecessary for two reasons. First, these tests can now be carried out by using computer simulation programs. Secondly, cosmetics are not necessary for human well-being. The pain caused to rabbits in these experiments, by contrast, is intense and life threatening. Therefore, the pain caused to animals in cosmetic experiments cannot be morally justified.

3. Presenting Objections to the Thesis

It is generally best to do this part of the paper after you have completed at least a rough draft of your supporting arguments. Most of the advice for presenting your supporting arguments applies to this part of the paper.

Step into your opponent's shoes for a while and ask yourself what are some of the arguments against your thesis statement. Go back and review your research materials by philosophers or others who disagree with your thesis statement. Make a list of the objections or counterarguments. Select the three or four strongest objections or counterarguments. If you numbered your arguments you should also number the counterarguments; for example, Objection 1.

Resist the temptation to use only the weaker counterarguments in an attempt to make your own position look more compelling. Remember that your audience (including me, your professor and most balanced critic), is familiar with the arguments on both sides of the issue; your audience is interested in how you respond to the stronger counterarguments, not with how deftly you avoid them.

The counterarguments should address, as much as possible, the issues brought up in the arguments presented in the previous section. For example, some philosophers argue that rationality, rather than sentience, is the necessary criteria for personhood. Many rights ethicists, especially natural rights ethicists, argue that only humans have rights. Both of these counterarguments need to be addressed if you are doing a paper on the morality of using nonhuman animals in cosmetic experiments. Present the counterarguments in the most convincing form possible. Save your objections to the counterarguments for the next section of your paper, "Responding to objections to the thesis."

4. Response to Objections to the Thesis

Respond to objections one at a time. If you numbered your counterarguments, refer to each one by its number; for example, Response to Objection 1. Avoid the temptation to dismiss the objections or counterarguments by using fallacies. If you cannot come up with a reasonable response, consider going back and modifying your own position during the next rewrite of your paper. If the objection is a good one but you do not change your thesis, you should explain why the moral concerns that support your thesis statement are morally more compelling.

5. Conclusion

The conclusion sums up your paper. It should include the following:

- a restatement of the thesis
- a brief summary of argument

The following is an example of a conclusion:

In conclusion, the use of sentient nonhuman animals, such as rabbits, in cosmetic experiments cannot be morally justified. The pain caused to these animals clearly

outweighs the benefits to humans. Even if it is concluded that humans have a right to use other animals for our benefit, cosmetic experiments are not necessary to the well-being of humans. Furthermore, I have argued that rights should be based on interests rather than self-assertion. Sentient animals have an interest in freedom of movement and the avoidance of pain, interests that are thwarted by using them in cosmetic experiments. Furthermore, animal experimentation violates the principle of equality because it is considered morally repugnant to use humans of the same mental capacity as rabbits for cosmetic experiments. Albert Schweitzer once said that we are not truly civilized if we concern ourselves only with the relation of humans to other humans. What is important is the relation of humans to all life. Ending animal testing in cosmetic experiments is one step on the road to becoming truly civilized.

We will discuss in detail, why the above conclusion constitutes a more than satisfactory conclusion.

6. Bibliography and Footnotes

Any references or works used from other sources should be cited either in footnotes at the bottom of each page (which I prefer somewhat less than...), or in endnotes. In citing books and articles, include the author's name, the title of the work, and information about the publication, such as edition, volume number, page number, publisher, and date of publication. I do, of course, require a Bibliography (of sources, or Works Cited) used in composing the paper. Your Bibliography should include, at minimum, all the references mentioned in the footnotes.

There are different styles and formats for citing works. Although some professors have a clear preference for one particular style, others ask only that you be consistent in your format. I, in fact, require the MLA format (detailed below). There are several useful texts on writing papers for academic purposes, including ethics. One of the most popular is the *MLA* [Modern Language Association] *Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, Fifth Edition. It has been produced by Joseph Gibaldi, and is printed in New York, 1999. Updates to this style manual are provided at <http://www.mla.org/>. Another useful text for producing university-level papers is Kate Turabian's *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (University of Chicago Press).

PREPARING THE FINAL DRAFT

1. Reread and Edit. Once you have completed a satisfactory draft of your paper, put it aside for a few days. Then, go back and reread what you have. Ask yourself: "What am I trying to say?" Once you are clear on what you want to say, reread the paragraph and answer the question, "Have I said it? If so, have I expressed it clearly and as concisely as possible?"

Ask yourself: "Who is my audience?" Imagine me reading your paper. Put yourself in my shoes. Make notes in the margin of the draft. Remember: retain copies of all of your drafts that show visible markings of revision. These are important for getting you the most possible pre-writing credit for the Term Paper possible! After reflection, some of your arguments may appear weak or redundant to you. You may also have come up with some new stronger arguments for your position, or you may

have found some new information on the topic.

Some people have an easier time writing than speaking about ideas. Others by contrast, especially extroverts (E), speak well but may have difficulty putting their ideas down on paper. If you are one of these people, read your paper out loud to yourself, or find a willing listener. Reading aloud will bring out the weaknesses. In fact, you may even find yourself paraphrasing a particular sentence to make it even clearer.

Cut out all superfluous words and sentences. Remove all clutter from your paper. Although it has been stated that for most people's first drafts, approximately 50% can be cut out, I think this is a bit of an exaggeration. Nevertheless, heed the instinct to remove any excess. Perceptive personality types (P) are especially prone to turning out long, rambling papers. Papers on ethics and moral philosophy (on philosophy in general) are not the place for embellishment. Try to be as succinct as possible. Go back through your first draft and cross out all redundant and superfluous words, especially extra adverbs and adjectives.

2. The Final Touches. Writing is more than just putting ideas to paper. ***Your paper must meet the style and formatting guidelines established by me for this paper.*** If you are using footnotes and you do have a Bibliography (Works Cited), ensure that they are in the correct style, the MLA Guidelines established in the MLA Handbook (5th Edition).

Check your paper for grammar and spelling. Before printing out your final copy, check your paper for spelling and grammar. Although you surely have access to a spell-checker, be aware that no program is flawless. The same applies to grammar; check it carefully!

3. Printing the Final Draft. Again, in printing out your final draft allow a few days for getting the final draft into final form. Not only do printers and computers malfunction, but access to computer labs at high usage times is often complicated with delays. No matter what: be prepared for possible contingencies! Remember Murphy's law of Writing: the machinery is not going to work when you need it most. Be overprepared instead. Students who complain that their paper is not ready because the printer broke down, or their processors suddenly crashed only show lack of organization, rather than genuine hardship. Note that the Course Policy on Assessments spells out clearly what happens with late work!

Final Drafts Must be TYPED!

Your paper should be double-spaced on 8 1/2-by-11-inch, 20 lb. (or similar) white paper. Leave no more than 1-inch margins on the sides and bottom, and 1-1/2 inches at the top of each page. Each page should be numbered!! Use a letter quality printer with a font that is easy to read, preferably Times Roman 12-point font. Avoid fancy or smaller fonts because they are difficult to read. Always make a backup copy of your final draft in the event you need it.

Once your paper is printed, check to make sure that all the pages are there and in the proper order. If your paper is longer than 8 pages, you may want to include a title page. Even for somewhat shorter papers, I recommend a title page, and I ask that you

staple the pages together, rather than use a paper clip. Longer papers can be put in a binder.

Now, one last lil' note: Writing a paper on ethics can be (is!!) a wonderful learning experience as well as an opportunity to hone your analytical skills and writing skills. Realize that many of the skills you are using and have used this semester in preparing and actually writing the Ethics Term Paper can be transferred to other types of writing.
