The Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University
College of Education
Tallahassee, Florida 32307

Course Outline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Number</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Credits</th>
<th>Clock Hours Per Week</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EDF 5543</td>
<td>Philosophical Foundations of Education</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3 Lecture</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Department:** Secondary Education and Foundations

**Prerequisites:**


**Faculty Name:** Dr. R. Wallace [renee.Wallace@famu.edu]

**Office Location:** GEC B 200F

**Office Telephone:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Office Hours (Others by Appt.)</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Term and Year:**

**WEBSITE URL:** [htpp://famu.blackboard.com](http://famu.blackboard.com)

(must obtain access codes from professor to log on)

**Course Description**

Ontological, epistemological, and axiological perspectives on various philosophical schools of thought related to education.

**Overall Goals of the Course**

The general objective of this course is to help us to make a difference for good in education, to improve education; to improve all the people on whom we have an educational influence, and thus to improve society. As the Russian novelist Anton Chekhov once wrote in a letter to his brother, an educated person has a positive influence for good on everybody he or she interacts with, on friends and relatives, and even on strangers encountered on the street. "Making a difference" starts by improving ourselves, for we ourselves are among those who need to learn and among those who need to strengthen the good points of our characters and to work on our
weaknesses. As the philosopher Martin Heidegger said, "in true education, it is always the teacher who learns the most." It important to mention, in connection with the aim of the course, that we should enjoy being professional educators. We should derive personal satisfaction from our work and our lives.

People who think they may want to be a professional educator needs to find out whether teaching is a kind of work that taps inner springs of joy deep in their beings. This can only be discovered through experience, but, as the philosopher Immanuel Kant said, "experience without concepts is blind." In this course we will develop concepts about education that will help us to interpret educational experience; among other things, we will aim to develop concepts that will help us to understand our own feelings about education.

This is a course in and about philosophy, and the means used to further the course's aim will include consideration of the roles played by philosophy in society. One of philosophy's roles is to criticize aims, also known as objectives, purposes, or values. Education is one of the few academic subjects which cannot avoid value judgments because its aims are practical. An educator, for better or worse, produces changes in other people's skills, beliefs, and attitudes; by definition, somebody who left everyone they encountered the same or worse could not be considered a "teacher" or an "educator."

This course will be self-reflective, inasmuch as the activities of the course will include reflection on the course's own aim. Philosophy is an open-ended activity. It is an ongoing dialogue. It always questions whether the premises it starts with are true. Plato (whom is often considered to be the founder of philosophy) said that philosophy asks all questions. Other disciplines take certain things for granted (geometry, for example, has axioms); philosophy takes nothing for granted, not even itself, not even its aims. Another role played by philosophy as a discipline is that of analyst and critic of language. In this course there will be talk about language. This means that there will be talk about the terms aforementioned in stating the course's general objective, such as "education," "definition," "attitude," "purpose," "improve," and "good." It also means that there will be talk about the process of defining terms, and about the various acts that are performed when one speaks, writes, listens, or reads. As a small beginning toward becoming more sophisticated about language, it is suggested that you look up the word "education" and "philosophy" in the Oxford English Dictionary.

This course is designed to help students examine the diverse philosophical views that have affected, and are affecting, educational policy in the United States. Students will explore questions about the purposes, ends, and means of education, and assess their own philosophy through readings, discussions, and lectures. The central aims of the course will be to provide students with content knowledge about philosophical theories, philosophical debates about controversies in education and to improve their skills in understanding philosophical ideas, assessing the strengths and weaknesses of different philosophical arguments, seeing the relevance of philosophical theories to their own experience, and formulating and defending their own views on controversial issues.

The basic overall goal(s) of the course are:

To reflectively **analyze** one's own philosophy,

To **understand** the development of western education and how it impacts education in our society today,
To understand various teaching philosophies,

To comprehend the educational needs of our society and how various philosophical models may fulfill those needs,

To practice and participate in the demonstration of various philosophies and the discussion about them in order to improve one’s own understanding of the philosophies and how they may apply to current educational issues.

Professional Education Unit Conceptual Framework

The Conceptual Framework of the Professional Education Unit (PEU) at Florida A&M University may be described as an integrated approach to providing educational experiences that result in exemplary professional educators. The term “exemplary” describes the kind of graduates the unit strives to produce. Educational experiences include courses, clinical experiences, and support services, all of which are interrelated and integrated and have several strands of emphasis that pervade them. These experiences provide the foundation (knowledge, skills, and dispositions) for the continuous process of life-long learning for an exemplary professional. The integrated approach of the PEU’s Conceptual Framework is comprised of the component activities and cross-curricular themes.
to guide and build a rigorous, relevant, and constantly evolving teacher education program. These themes are: **multiculturalism, educational technology, values, problem solving, professionalism and urban/rural education.** Program components or “orbits” shown in the diagram are: student services, professional induction, general studies, specialty studies, faculty development, professional studies, and field/clinical experiences. Although program components appear as self-contained “orbits” on the diagram, all are dependent on and integrated with each other as to program design, implementation, and evaluation.

The preparation of an exemplary professional at FAMU will be guided and characterized by certain essential measurable qualities (outcomes) as defined in the: *Educator Accomplished Practices* specified by the Florida Education Standards Commission; *Florida Essential Teaching Competencies* identified by the Florida Council for Educational Management; and/or competencies set forth by national specialty organizations for each program in the unit (i.e. syllabi, program matrices, and the Florida Department of Education original folios).

The Conceptual Framework for the FAMU Professional Education Unit is grounded in a combination of directed, constructivist, developmental, and social learning theories derived from the writings of system theorists, educational philosophers, social scientists, practitioners, and developmental theorists. Concepts from these writers and from the varied educational learned societies help form the knowledge base for the unit’s curriculum components and principles of its Conceptual Framework.

### Specific Behavioral Objectives

Candidates will:

Articulate a personal philosophy of **education.** (FEAP 2; 4; 8)

Compare major philosophical positions including Idealism, Realism, Pragmatism, and Existentialism and the theories of education specific to them (INTASC 2); (FEAP 4; 8)

Study the discipline of philosophy and examine the philosophical roots of the field of education (INTASC 2);

Examine the inquiry specific to epistemology, ontology, and axiology (INTASC 2); (FEAP 4; 8)

 Evaluate minority issues and problems relative to a dominant philosophical perspective (INTASC 4); (FEAP 4; 5; 8)

### Florida Accomplished Practice Standards

**Accomplished Practice # 2 - Communication**

A competent teacher uses effective communication techniques with students and all other stakeholders.

**Professional:** The professional teacher constantly seeks to create a classroom that is accepting, yet businesslike, on task, and produces results. She/he communicates to all students high expectations for learning, and supports, encourages and gives positive and fair feedback about their learning efforts.
This teacher models good communication skills and creates an atmosphere in the classroom that encourages mutual respect and appreciation of different cultures, linguistic backgrounds, learning styles and abilities.

**Accomplished Practice # 4 - Critical Thinking**

A competent teacher uses appropriate techniques and strategies which promote and enhance critical, creative, and evaluative thinking capabilities of students.

**Professional:** The professional teacher will use a variety of performance assessment techniques and strategies that measure higher order thinking skills in students and can provide realistic projects and problem solving activities which will enable all students to demonstrate their ability to think creatively.

**Accomplished Practice # 5 - Diversity**

A competent teacher uses teaching and learning strategies that reflect each student's culture, learning styles, special needs, and socio-economic background.

**Professional:** The professional teacher establishes a "risk-taking" environment which accepts and fosters diversity. The teacher must demonstrate knowledge of varied cultures by practices such as conflict resolution, mediation, creating a climate of openness, inquiry and support.

**Accomplished Practice # 8 - Knowledge of Subject Matter**

A competent teacher demonstrates knowledge and understanding of the subject matter.

**Professional:** The professional teacher has a basic understanding of the subjects she/he teaches and is beginning to understand that her/his subject is linked to other disciplines and can be applied in real world "integrated settings." The teacher seeks out ways/sources to expand her/his knowledge. The commitment to learning about new knowledge included keeping abreast of sources which will enhance teaching. The teacher's repertoire of teaching skills include a variety of means to assist student acquisition of new knowledge.

**Accomplished Practice # 12 - Technology**
A competent teacher uses appropriate technology in teaching and learning processes.

**Professional:** The professional teacher uses technology (as appropriate) to establish an atmosphere of active learning with existing and emerging technologies available at the school site. She/he provides students with opportunities to use technology to gather and share information with others, and facilitates access to the use of electronic resources.

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**Policies**

**Policy Statement on Non-Discrimination**

It is the policy of Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University to assure that each member of the University community be permitted to work or attend classes in an environment free from any form of discrimination including race, religion, color, age, disability, sex, marital status, national origin, veteran status and sexual harassment as prohibited by state and federal statutes. This shall include applicants for admission to the University and employment.

**Academic Honor Policy**

The University’s Academic Honor Policy is located in the FANG Student Handbook, under the Student Code of Conduct- Regulation 2.012 section, beginning on page 55-56.

**ADA Compliance**

To comply with the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), please advise instructor of accommodations required to insure participation in this course. Documentation of disability is required and should be submitted to the Learning Development and Evaluation Center (LDEC). For additional information please contact the LDEC at (850) 599-3180.

**ALCs for each degree program can be found at**


ALCs answer three basic questions: What will students learn by the end of their academic programs? Have they learned what they have been taught by their professors? How do we measure these quantities? For details regarding the ALCs, go to www.famu.edu/assessment and click on Academic Learning Compacts.
Methods of Instruction and Evaluation of Candidate Progress

This course will be taught through lecture, discussion, case studies, videotapes, and small group work. A case study approach that emphasizes equity issues will be used, along with other relevant teacher materials and strategies. All relevant "equal access" issues relating to the rights of minority and handicapped students, gender issues, and issues affecting the working conditions of teachers will be explored--particularly as they relate to the kinds of decisions teachers must make. Activities will include student self-awareness prompting situations, lecture-discussion, case studies, clinical experience, group discussion, simulations, and cooperative learning activities.

Course Requirements

Reading Assignments: Because we will construct knowledge together based on our shared experience of the text, reading well is critical to this course. In this course, we will not practice the habits of slash and burn reading, in which students are rewarded for dismissing an author's argument for its inevitable flaws; that sort of reading is rarely constructive, and it almost always reflects a lack of care. Rather, you will be asked to read constructively, to identify aspects of the reading that you find compelling, curious, or useful. You should come prepared for class by having carefully read the texts for the day, taken notes on your impressions and questions, written any assignments, have your individual written reflection which includes your philosophical question, and come prepared to discuss that coupled with the specific question(s) listed for each assigned chapter reading. You will be expected to share your own critical perspective on the readings in the course.

1. STATEMENT OF PASSION

One Page: Describe something that gives you great pleasure, feeds your inquiring mind, stimulates your imagination, distracts you from drudgery, or consumes your soul. There is no wrong answer. We will share these tidbits of ourselves during the third class session.

2. WEEKLY CLASS ASSIGNMENT(S)

Ten (10) essays (3-5 pages each) will comprise your written assignments for the course. The essay topics, questions, and due dates are as follows:

The primary function of these short weekly exercises is to give you an opportunity to practice the kind of reading and writing expected in this course, in a format that is
shorter and less time-consuming than full-fledged papers. The weeklies will have a maximum assessment of 10 point(s).

**Topic #1**—Basically, the first challenge posed is to explain why modern Idealists are so attracted to the Great Books type of instruction (similar to that introduced in the 1950’s at the University of Chicago, by the way). Our text mentions the Great Books (p. 29) in a discussion about Idealism, and your challenge is to analyze this within the context of Idealist Philosophy. Reflect on the central tenets of Idealism and explain why this type of instruction appeals to modern Idealists. [Pp. 1-47]

**Due date for Topic 1:**

**Topic #2**—This challenge raises the debate over 'Objective' measures of performance and learning (stressed by the Realist), as distinct from 'Subjective' development and learning (as stressed by the Idealist): can subjective attitudes and values be objectively measured? Should they be? How are inner, personal aspects of learning to be compared and contrasted to outer, impersonal aspects of learning, according the the Idealists and Realists? [Pp. 48-90]

**Due date for Topic 2:**

**Topic #3**—(Still on the Idealism and Realism chapters.) Should English be required as the primary language in the schools? Even for students who live and go to school in predominantly non-English speaking communities? Debates on bi-lingual schooling are part of this...see these websites for examples of some earlier debate issues: [http://coe.sdsu.edu/people/jmora/Prop227/BERoadmap.htm](http://coe.sdsu.edu/people/jmora/Prop227/BERoadmap.htm). Research and develop your views on this lively debate, and reflect on what the Idealist and Realist philosophies might have to say on this contemporary debate.

**Due date for Topic 3:**

**Topic #4**—Eastern Philosophy contrasts with Western Thought in several ways, in particular as it applies to educational theory and practice. Of course, there are many similarities, too. As you read the materials in chapter 3 on Eastern Philosophy and Religion, I am interested in your reactions and impressions concerning several of the
claims made. Your essay is to share these impressions and discuss two or three questions you find most important. [Pp. 91-126]

Due date for Topic 4:

Topic #5---Pragmatism stresses the integration of learning and acting, and the importance of students' experiences being associated with what they learn as facts, in order to develop abilities to act constructively in the real-world society which is ever-changing. The Pragmatist's 'educational relativity,' and their rejection of fixed, compartmentalized disciplines of education, have produced much criticism of this philosophy. Why the criticism, do you think? Explain, and give examples.

Due date for Topic 5:

6---Reconstructionist philosophy urges social activism in the schools, as students are to become civic leaders. Yet this raises the controversy of political causes in the educational curriculum, and the question of appropriate social and political intervention in the schools. Join in a lively debate on this timely topic. Defend or criticize Reconstructionist philosophy of education with convincing arguments; your positions are important!

Due date for Topic 6:

Topic #7---Behaviorism urges the consistent use of operant conditioning in learning, as developed by the psychologist B.F. Skinner. What benefits, and what problems, do you see being raised in this philosophy's application to schooling and to education reform? Use examples to help illustrate your ideas.

Due date for Topic 7:

Topic #8---(Related to Chpt. 7) Philosophers who promote Existentialism and Phenomenology as proper philosophies of education insist on an inner, self-reflective study of human experience and self-understanding, as vital to learning and acting. One might see this approach as the direct opposite of the Behaviorist's outward, behavioristic model for approaching learning and education. What problems, or what benefits, do you perceive with existential philosophy of education? Why?
Due date for Topic 7:

Topic #9--- (Related to Chpt. 10) On pg. 351, the authors discuss general tenets of the postmodernists' conception of methods and curriculum in schools, as their philosophy is articulated. Explore this facet of educational philosophy, and develop your own ideas pro or con with respect to postmodernism.

Due date for Topic 8

Topic #10---Compare and contrast main features of two of the topics covered in the text, but not reflected in the above topics; that is, Analytical philosophy and Marxism.

Due date for Topic 7:

Written Assignments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Unsatisfactory 74 – Below</th>
<th>Basic 75-85</th>
<th>Proficient 86-95</th>
<th>Exceptional 96 – Above</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Content – as outlined in specific course assignment guidelines</td>
<td>Does not follow assignment guidelines or address the selected topic as requested</td>
<td>Addresses guideline components with minimal support (evidence and examples)</td>
<td>Follows guidelines, clearly supports responses and clarifies connections</td>
<td>Follows guidelines, provides support, clarifies connections and extends key concepts to include personal insights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization (clarity, coherence, transitions)</td>
<td>Writing does not follow a formally established or identifiable (creative) pattern</td>
<td>Major sections are arranged in a clear, logical sequence</td>
<td>Major sections, subsections, and paragraphs are arranged in clear, logical format</td>
<td>Major sections, subsections, paragraphs, and transitions are clearly, elegantly arranged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanics (spelling, grammar, proofing)</td>
<td>Multiple errors in spelling and grammar detract from the message</td>
<td>Sentence structure is clear and direct despite minor errors in grammar and/or spelling</td>
<td>Sentence structure is clear and direct. There are no egregious errors in grammar or spelling</td>
<td>Writing is clear, direct, and without error. Vivid language and lively sentence construction make a strong impression</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. PERSONAL PHILOSOPHY PAPER

The point of having you write a philosophy paper is for you to develop and practice certain important fundamental skills. They include the following: (1) the ability to comprehend, reconstruct, and analyze complex philosophical arguments; (2) the ability to critically evaluate such arguments; (3) the ability to argue persuasively for your own views; and (4) the ability to articulate your thoughts in a clear, concise, and well-organized manner.

Many students believe that there are no right or wrong answers in philosophy. Some would disagree, but nevertheless students should not think that they have to adopt the position argued for in one of the lectures or readings in order to get a good grade. In actuality, the position a student takes in his/her paper is irrelevant to the professors assessment of it. Your paper will be evaluated, not on the basis of the position taken, but on the basis of the strength of the arguments presented. Therefore, it is strongly suggested that you adopt whatever position you believe is correct. This should make the task more interesting for you and will thereby increase your chances of writing a good paper. (refer to suggested guidelines)

**Rubric for Personal Philosophy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Not Acceptable (74 and below)</th>
<th>Adequate (75-85)</th>
<th>Proficient (86-95)</th>
<th>Exceptional (96 +)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Content: Expression of Individual Message (25 points)</td>
<td>Does not make a philosophical statement</td>
<td>Includes ideas but without adequate support</td>
<td>Includes appropriate ideas with some support</td>
<td>Ideas are appropriate and well supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization, Comprehensiveness and Clarity (25 points)</td>
<td>Unclear and inconsistent</td>
<td>Clear but not consistently or comprehensive</td>
<td>Clear and consistent but not comprehensive</td>
<td>Clear, consistent, and comprehensive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanics (25 points)</td>
<td>Multiple errors in spelling and grammar detract from message</td>
<td>Clear and direct despite minor errors in grammar and/or spelling</td>
<td>Clear, direct, with some (3+) grammar/spelling Errors</td>
<td>Clear, direct, free from error(s) or minimal error(s) (1-2_</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Originality (Other) (25 points)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Displays minimal originality</td>
<td>Meets all assignment criteria and displays originality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. PHILOSOPHY PAPER POWERPOINT
You are to develop a PowerPoint presentation that articulates your personal philosophy, explains how it is grounded in the philosophies that have been studied and explains how it will guide you as a professional educator.

**GUIDE:**

**Basic Tenets**
Briefly list the *main ideas* of your personal philosophy. A listing of the specific philosopher(s) and their philosophy, but focus on the major concepts.

**Personal Beliefs**
Briefly explain your beliefs and operational define concepts, and your *reaction* to the application of your philosophy to the *field of education*.

**Educational Implications**
Indicate (1) the *aims of education*, (2) *educational issues*, and (3) the *roles of the professional educator*, according to your personal philosophy.

**Cartoons**
Include *two cartoons* (crediting your sources) that reinforce the main principles of your philosophy, and a brief explanation why your cartoons fit that your philosophy. **DO NOT** find cartoons by placing the words “cartoon” and the name of the philosophy itself in a search engine. **DO NOT** use cartoons that have to word “philosophy,” **OR** the name of the philosophy itself, in the title or in the wording of the cartoon.

**Song Lyrics**
Include *one set of song lyrics* (crediting the author), or a poem if you prefer, that reinforces the main principles of your philosophy, and a *brief explanation* why those lyrics fit your philosophy.

**News Article**
Include *one short recent news article* (crediting the source) that reinforces the
main principles of your philosophy, and a brief explanation why the article fits your philosophy.

### POWERPOINT RUBRIC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRITERIA</th>
<th>Not Acceptable (74 and below)</th>
<th>Adequate (75-85)</th>
<th>Proficient (86-95)</th>
<th>Exceptional (96 +)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Storyboard / Planning</strong> [12 points]</td>
<td>Few slides and no overview of presentation</td>
<td>The slides are not in logical order &amp; have incomplete information</td>
<td>The slides are in sequential order and are informative</td>
<td>The slides are in logical order, with important information, colors, fonts, &amp; graphics indicated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy [12 points]</td>
<td>Subject knowledge is not evident. Information is confusing, incorrect, and flawed. Conclusions simply involved restating information. Conclusions were not supported by evidence.</td>
<td>Some knowledge is evident, but some information is confusing and/or incorrect. Conclusions could be supported by stronger evidence. Level of analysis could have been deeper.</td>
<td>Knowledge is evident in much of the project. Most information is clear and correct. Student product shows good effort was made in analyzing the evidence collected.</td>
<td>Subject knowledge is evident throughout the project. All information is clear and correct. Student carefully analyzed the information collected and drew appropriate and inventive conclusions supported by evidence. Voice of the student writer is evident.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content [12 points]</td>
<td>Student did follow the assignment guide and did not include the minimum required components</td>
<td>Student appears to have minimally followed the assignment guide most components were minimally addressed displaying minimal effort</td>
<td>Student followed the assignment guide, all components were addressed</td>
<td>Student went beyond the assignment guide, showed originality in critical think, content demonstrated, design assignment components demonstrated excellent integration. Exceptional effort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research / Information Gathering [12 points]</td>
<td>Student(s) gathered information that lacked relevance, quality, depth and balance.</td>
<td>Student(s) gathered information from a limited range of sources and displayed minimal effort in selecting quality resources</td>
<td>Student(s) gathered information from a variety of relevant sources--print and electronic</td>
<td>Student gathered information from a variety of quality electronic and print sources, including appropriate licensed databases. Sources are relevant, balanced and include critical readings relating to the thesis or problem. Primary sources were included (if appropriate).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Documentation</strong> [15 points]</td>
<td>Student had little to no discernable documentation.</td>
<td>Student needs to use greater care in documenting sources. Documentation was poorly constructed or absent.</td>
<td>Student documented sources with some care, Sources are cited on Works-Cited/Works-Consulted pages/slides. Few errors noted.</td>
<td>Student documented all sources, including visuals, and animations. Sources are properly cited, on Works-Cited/Works-Consulted pages/slides. Documentation is error-free.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. **AUTHENTIC RESEARCH—IDENTIFICATION OF AN EDUCATIONAL PROBLEM**

You will be responsible for identifying an educational problem, establishing a philosophical framework for defining and addressing that problem, proposing a concrete response to that problem, and reflecting upon the efficacy and limitations of that response.

The purpose of the assignment is to enable you to consider the identification of an educational problem with specificity, precision, and honesty. To be successful, it must be deeply self-reflective and cannot presume to address at all questions you don't ask, nor even completely the questions that you do ask. You will be graded on the extent to which you engage thoughtfully with the components of this assignment. Each piece should related directly and completely to the next piece, producing a coherent, though certainly not complete, exploration of the problem.

All of the elements listed below are required for individual student projects.

**A. Selecting a problem (one page):** Following the project title and your name, you must write an introduction to the problem, in which you define the scope of the problem and describe its relevance to the course goals. Be as specific and precise as you can, making reference to the problem's historical, social, and/or cultural context, and, where appropriate, your relationship to it. Be sure to state why you believe this is in fact a real problem (you may need to do some research to find data on this subject). Finally, you must explain your personal rationale for selecting this particular problem.
B. Establishing a philosophical framework (two pages): By the end of the course, you will have been spending a great deal of time thinking about the ways in which different philosophic perspectives are and are not useful in different situations for different individuals, and step B asks you think about your own philosophical perspective in relation to the problem you’ve chosen. Before you articulate your mode of engagement with the problem, you must explicitly acknowledge both the important assumptions, values and ideas that have led you to view your stated problem as a problem, and your mode of engagement as an appropriate response to that problem. That is to say, you need to describe what we’ll refer to as your philosophical framework. Your selection of an appropriate (related, coherent, efficacious) philosophical framework is crucial, and you should be sure to explain very clearly why this particular framework suits both this problem and your mode of engagement, whether they be primarily epistemological, political, social, methodological, or anything else. Thus, you need not only to explain the philosophical framework itself but also to justify its value in this situation.

C. Explaining your mode of engagement, individual (one page): Explain why you are working on this assignment.

D. Proposing and explaining a response to the problem within this philosophical context (four to five pages): Taking the preceding sections into account, propose a response to this problem. The response can be curricular, pedagogical, institutional, methodological, discursive, political — in short, while it must involve human action with specific goals and consequences, the components and arena of human action are entirely up to you. Lay out each step of this decision very clearly. Why respond in this particular manner and not in others? How do these answers relate to the philosophical framework you’ve chosen?

E. Reflecting upon the efficacy and limitations of that response (two pages): Discuss with as much honesty, self-reflection, and humility as possible your proposal. What are its potential benefits? What are its drawbacks? What does it fail to address that is important? How might those things be addressed in another possible response? How realistic is your proposal — and what do you mean by "realistic"?

PLEASE NOTE: No assignment will be accepted late! If an assignment is accepted late there will be an automatic deduction of one letter grade per day until the assignment is given personally to the professor. It is better to compete and turn in all assignment(s) by the due date. An excused absence will not effect this policy, all assignment(s) are due as prescribed on the course syllabus!

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**Rubric for Authentic Research—Identification Of An Educational Problem**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Unsatisfactory (74 and below)</th>
<th>Basic (75-85)</th>
<th>Proficient (86-95)</th>
<th>Exceptional (96+)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Content: Expression of Individual Message</td>
<td>Does not make an identification of an educational</td>
<td>Includes ideas but without adequate support</td>
<td>Includes appropriate identification of an educational</td>
<td>Identification of an educational problem is appropriately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(25 points)</td>
<td>problem statement</td>
<td>problem with some support</td>
<td>stated and strongly supported with documentation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization, Comprehensiveness and Clarity (25 points)</td>
<td>Unclear and inconsistent and page minimum page requirement not met</td>
<td>Clear but not consistently or comprehensive; minimal documentation</td>
<td>Clear and consistent but not comprehensive; some documentation</td>
<td>Clear, consistent, and comprehensive; citations integrated and strong documentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanics (25 points)</td>
<td>Multiple errors in spelling and grammar detract from message</td>
<td>Clear and direct despite minor errors in grammar and/or spelling</td>
<td>Clear, direct, with very few (4+) grammar/spelling Errors</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Originality (Other) (25 points)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Displays originality and minimally meets assignment requirement(s)</td>
<td>Clearly exceeds assignment requirement(s) and exceptional originality clearly demonstrated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Methods of Evaluation**

**Grading Procedure and Scale**
Course grades will be based upon cumulative points on all assignments and upon class participation. The relative weighting for each of these expectations is listed below.
### Class Assignments/Expectations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class Assignments/Expectations</th>
<th>Points Possible</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Weekly 1</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Weekly 2</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Weekly 3</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Weekly 4</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Weekly 5</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Weekly 6</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Weekly 7</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Weekly 8</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Weekly 9</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Weekly 10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Personal Philosophy</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Technological Presentation</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Examination&amp;/or Presentation #14</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Authentic Research-Identify Problem</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Class Participation</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Points</strong></td>
<td><strong>600</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A = 540-600    B = 539-499    C = 498-458    D = 457-417    F = 416 and below

Dr. Wallace reserves the right to assign the grade that most clearly represents your performance in the course.

---

### Tentative Course Outline:

**TENTATIVE CLASS SCHEDULE**

The following schedule for the class is tentatively set forth to provide students with a general idea of the scope and sequencing of this course. The instructor may alter either the scope of the presentation/activities or the content based on student response patterns and/or weather exigencies as may arise*. That alternation may include substituting assignments or making other adjustments (modifications, deletions, additions) which may be necessary to more fully achieve the stipulated course objectives. Attendance is critical for full participation in activities and discussion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Pre-Class Reading Assignment</th>
<th>Assignment Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Name, Address, Telephone, Email Get Acquainted</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Syllabus Review</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td><strong>Weekly #1 DUE</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter One</td>
<td>Chapter Two</td>
<td>Chapter Three</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Idealism and Education</td>
<td>Realism and Education</td>
<td>Eastern Philosophy, Religion and Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“What is truth?”</td>
<td>“Is Aristotle’s view for leading a good life, appropriate for schools today?”</td>
<td>“Does Eastern religious and philosophical thought continue to impact educational views today?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Does one have to believe something in order to know it?”</td>
<td>“What distinguishes classical realism from modern realism?”</td>
<td>“What is a major difference between Western and Eastern thought on education?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Weekly #2 DUE</td>
<td>Weekly #3 DUE</td>
<td>Weekly #4 DUE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
contemporary issues), what kind of contemporary issues in education need this kind of critical analysis today and why?”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Chapter Five</td>
<td><strong>Weekly #5 DUE</strong>&lt;br&gt;Reconstructionism and Education&lt;br&gt;“What are the major strengths and weaknesses of the reconstrictionists point of view?”&lt;br&gt;“What kind of person would make the best teacher?”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 7       | Chapter Six                              | **Weekly #6 DUE**<br>Behaviorism and Education<br>“What ways have behavioristic values been incorporated into today’s teaching?”<br>“How does the constructivists view of the student differ from the
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Chapter Title</th>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Mar 5</td>
<td>Chapter Seven: Existentialism, Phenomenology, and Education</td>
<td>“How can professional educators develop the authentic person?” “What intellectual characteristics should a person have to be a professional educator from the existentialists point of view?”</td>
<td>Weekly #7 DUE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter Eight: Analytic Philosophy and Education</td>
<td>“Are problems addressed by philosophy of education primarily matters of language, or are they more substantial?” “From the analytic perspective, what is the main role of the professional educator?”</td>
<td>Weekly #8 DUE Research-Identified Problem DUE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter Nine: Marxism and Education</td>
<td>“What do neo-Marxists believe is the best kind of education?” “What characteristics does a Marxist professional educator need to be successful, and what”</td>
<td>Weekly #9 DUE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
kind of learning environment should be utilized?”

Chapter Ten
Philosophy, Education, and the
Challenge of Postmodernism

“What role do the concepts of
power and empowerment have in
postmodernist educational aims,
curriculum, and teaching
strategies?”

Weekly #10 DUE

PRESENTATION

ALL POWERPOINT(S) DUE
ON CD; DISKETTE; or
JUMP DRIVE

Personal Philosophy DUE
PowerPoint DUE

PRESENTATION

PRESENTATION

Examination

Rubric for Class Participation and Attendance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Exceptional (100)</th>
<th>Acceptable (90-80)</th>
<th>Unacceptable (70 below)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation in Class</td>
<td>Attends all but one or two class sessions; on time; always well prepared for</td>
<td>Generally well prepared for class; evident that student has completed some reading</td>
<td>Does not attend class on consistent basis; never prepared for class, evident that student has not completed reading assignments prior to class; exhibits negative attitudes toward course and class members; does not contribute to class discussions or in-class activities; four absences and/or excessive tardies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(50 points)</td>
<td>class, evident that student has completed all reading assignments prior to class;</td>
<td>assignments prior to class; exhibits ambivalent attitude toward course and class</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>exhibits positive, supportive attitude toward course and class members; consistently</td>
<td>members; contributes minimally to class discussions or in-class; three absences and/or excessive tardies</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>contributes to class discussion, consistently contributes to in-class activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Language/Mechanics</td>
<td>Follows standard rules of</td>
<td>Inappropriate speech and</td>
<td>Poor speech and grammar,</td>
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<tr>
<td>Graduate Program Competencies</td>
<td>Candidates’ Demonstration</td>
<td>Criteria for Achievement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Has a basic understanding of the subject field and is beginning to understand that the subject is linked to other disciplines and can be applied to real world integrated settings. The teacher’s repertoire of teaching skills include a variety of means to assist student acquisition of new knowledge and skills using that knowledge.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Communication</strong></td>
<td>Oral Presentations and Class Discussions 1) Oral Presentation &amp; Class Discussions 2) Weekly Assignment 3) Personal Philosophy Paper 4) Authentic Research 5) Executive Summary</td>
<td>See Rubric Must meet at least 80% of criteria.</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Use appropriate grammar and Sentence structure (oral/written)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Positive learning environment with incentives and consequences</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Practice strategies that support Individual and group inquiry</em></td>
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<td><em>Receive constructive feedback</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Acquire interaction routines for cooperative learning and whole group activities.</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Critical Thinking</strong></td>
<td>Weekly Assignment 2) Personal Philosophy Paper 3) Executive Summary 4) Authentic Research</td>
<td>See Rubric Must meet at least 80% of criteria.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Expand thinking abilities</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Encourage problem solving</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Use creative and Innovative activities</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Use technology &amp; tools</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Diversity</strong></td>
<td>Personal Philosophy Paper 2) Authentic Research</td>
<td>See Rubric Must meet at least 80% of criteria.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Acquire the skills &amp; dispositions to understand &amp; support diverse student learning Practice strategies such as: acceptance, tolerance, mediation &amp; resolution.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Technology</strong></td>
<td>Personal Philosophy</td>
<td>See Rubric Must meet at least 80% of criteria.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Use &amp; integrate appropriate</em></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Reference: 


Dewey Democracy and Education. [http://www.neiu.edu/users/uccunnin/dewey.html](http://www.neiu.edu/users/uccunnin/dewey.html).


Graduate Candidate Acknowledgment and Understanding

I, ________________________________________, acknowledge receipt of a syllabus and the course schedule for Dr. Wallace’s EDF 5543 class Philosophical Foundations of Education for the ________________ Semester at Florida A&M University.

I understand it is my responsibility to read, know and abide by the requirements stated in this syllabus.

I understand I should see or call the professor as soon as any problems occur during the term.

Student signature: ________________________________ Date: _____________

GUIDE FOR WRITING A PHILOSOPHY PAPER

DEVELOPING A THESIS
A thesis is a statement of one's position on a given issue. So the first step in developing a thesis (once you have decided upon a topic) is to decide what your position is. In order to do this, you will need to thoroughly review all the course materials relevant to your topic. In most cases, you will have been presented with a number of arguments on both sides of the issue. Carefully analyze and evaluate all these arguments. In the process, you should develop your own take on the issue.

It is vital that you clearly define your thesis before you begin writing. For it is your thesis that will guide you throughout the entire writing process. Everything you write should somehow contribute to the defense of your thesis. So unless you define your thesis at the onset, you won't know what to write since you won't know what you are arguing for.

Your thesis should narrow the focus of your paper. For instance, you may be asked to write about euthanasia. But, of course, it isn't possible to consider every important philosophical issue concerning euthanasia in a term paper. So your thesis should narrow your focus to something more manageable.

Lastly, your thesis should be neither trivial nor absurd. For instance, if your thesis is that it is morally wrong for a woman who is eight and half months pregnant to have an abortion just so she can fly to Hawaii for a vacation, the response to your paper is likely to be: "So what?" Almost no one would disagree. This is not to say that you have to take an absolutist position. That is, you needn't choose between the claim that abortion is always wrong and the claim that abortion is always permissible. Instead, you could argue for something like the claim that abortion is permissible in the case of rape, and you wouldn't even have to take stand on any other cases of abortion. Also note that your thesis doesn't have to make any positive assertion. Your thesis could be that X's argument against abortion is unsound (where X is one of the authors you read). Although this thesis doesn't establish anything about the morality of abortion, it is still perfectly good thesis. For showing that the argument of an important philosopher is unsound is far from trivial. On the other hand, you also don't thesis to absurd; you don't want your thesis to be so controversial that you have no chance of persuading anyone.
ARGUING FOR YOUR POSITION

Writing a philosophy paper involves more than simply stating your opinions. You must support your views by presenting arguments in favor of them. Also you should try to defend your views against potential criticisms. That is, try to anticipate what objections might be raised against your views and then, in your paper, demonstrate both that you are aware of these possible objections and that you can respond to them.

A philosophy paper should be rationally persuasive. For one, this means that you should appeal to your reader's intellect as opposed to his/her emotions. Thus you should avoid the use of inflammatory language and name-calling. For instance, avoid statements such as, "Any doctor who would give a patient a lethal injection is a Nazi." Second, if your arguments are to be persuasive, they must not rest upon unsupported, contentious claims. Instead they should ultimately rest upon assumptions that even a reasonable person of the opposing view would accept. So if, for instance, you want to argue that abortion is morally wrong, you shouldn't begin by assuming that the fetus has a right to life. Realize that such an argument would unlikely persuade anyone who is "pro-choice." After all, the view that the fetus has a right to life from the moment of conception is precisely what most pro-choice advocates would contest. Of course, you can argue that the fetus has a right to life; you just shouldn't assume it.

The point is to avoid making any assumptions which someone of the opposing view is sure to reject. For you should think of your paper as an attempt to persuade someone of the opposing view, and if you are to have any chance of persuading such a person, you must first find some common ground from which to build your arguments.

A good example is Judith Jarvis Thomson's (1971) arguments in "A Defence of Abortion." In this paper, Thomson argues that abortion is morally permissible where the woman is pregnant as the result of being raped. Now what makes Thomson's arguments so compelling is that they are based on assumptions that even the most extreme anti-abortionist (i.e., one who holds that abortion is always wrong) would likely accept.
Thomson asks you to imagine waking up some morning to find yourself connected to an unconscious violinist suffering from a potentially fatal kidney disease. Suppose that last night the Society of Music Lovers kidnapped you and, without your consent, surgically connected the violinist to your circulatory system in a desperate attempt to save his life. So you now face the following choice. You can remain connected to the violinist for nine months by which time the violinist will be able to survive on his own, or you can unplug yourself from the violinist in which case the violinist will immediately die as a result.

Thomson assumes that in this situation you are under no obligation to remain connected to the violinist for the nine months. And thus you may unplug yourself from the violinist even if this entails killing him. Now this assumption seems relatively uncontroversial. But from this rather benign assumption Thomson is able to argue that abortion is sometimes permissible even if the fetus has a right to life. For the violinist surely has a right to life and yet it is permissible to kill him. And aborting a fetus whose existence is due to rape is, in all morally relevant respects, analogous to unplugging yourself from the violinist (or so Thomson argues). Thus Thomson concludes that it is permissible to have an abortion in certain circumstances (i.e., the case of rape) even if the fetus has a right to life from the moment of conception.

ARGUING AGAINST A CLAIM

The following are two of the most common strategies for arguing against a claim (You may find it useful to employ these strategies in your own paper.):

*Reductio ad Absurdum.* This strategy involves arguing against a claim by showing that it implies some absurdity. To illustrate, consider that some people claim that the reason human suffering is more important (morally speaking) than animal suffering is that humans have a kind and degree of intelligence that other animals lack. Here one could argue that we should reject such a claim given that it implies that the suffering of severely retarded infants (who also lack the kind and degree of intelligence that normal adults human beings possess) is less important than the suffering of normal adult human beings, which just seems patently absurd (Glover, 1977).
Presenting a Counter-example: Consider the adage "The enemy of my enemy is my friend." We can prove this adage false with the following counter-example. Iraq is the enemy of the United States, and Iran is the enemy of Iraq. But Iran is not a friend of the United States as the adage would imply (Martinich, 1996).

CRITICIZING AN ARGUMENT

Even if you are subsequently going to criticize an argument, state it first in a fair and sympathetic way, making clear why a reasonable person might be led to think in such a way. In some cases, it may even be necessary to make charitable revisions to an argument. That is, sometimes an argument is flawed in a way that can be easily fixed. In this case, you should explain how the argument can be revised and then focus your criticisms on this stronger, revised version of the argument. For instance, consider the following objection against Thomson's violinist example. Some people argue that Thomson's violinist example isn't analogous to pregnancy because being hooked up to the violinist for nine months is a greater burden for the person kidnapped than pregnancy is for the expectant mother -- at least, a pregnant woman can walk around and go places, whereas the person hooked up to the violinist is confined to a hospital bed. But it seems that Thomson could easily revise her analogy and still use it for the same effect. After all, even if we suppose that the violinist is a midget who could be carried on one's back for the nine months, it still seems permissible to disconnect yourself from him.

The point is you don't want to take the weakest argument for an opposing view an attack that. Rather you want to think of the strongest possible argument for an opposing view and show that even that argument fails. Only then will you have convinced others that the opposing view is indefensible.

Also, be sure that your criticisms focus on the relevant philosophical issues as opposed to any related empirical issues. In other words, I am not interested in papers that contest the empirical assertions made in the lectures and readings. The point of the assignment is to demonstrate your philosophical abilities, not your knowledge of any empirical facts. So if, for instance, your paper is about abortion, don't get too involved in empirical issues such as whether or not the
fetus is sentient or self-aware. You should instead focus on the related philosophical issues such as how sentience and self-awareness can affect the moral status of an entity?

**WRITING CLEARLY**

Refrain from using fancy words and long-winded sentences. Being clear is far more important than appearing to have a sophisticated writing style. Avoid using vocabulary that you are unaccustomed to using in ordinary conversation. Too many students think that being philosophical involves being complex and obscure. Quite the opposite, simplicity and clarity are the ideals of philosophy.

You should choose your words very carefully. Ask yourself: Does what I've written precisely express the thoughts that I mean to convey? Do not leave something unclear and just assume that your reader will be able to figure out what you mean. For instance, don't write something like "Abortion is the same thing as murder." (Seech, 1997). Abortion and murder are not the same thing. If abortion and murder were the same thing, then one could say that Jack the Ripper aborted many women. But, of course, this is absurd. Jack the Ripper murdered many women but aborted none. Of course, most people would understand that what you meant was that abortion is a form of murder. But whether or not your reader is able to figure out what you mean is irrelevant, because either way it is bad writing.

You will find that philosophers write with a degree of precision that is well beyond that which is customary in ordinary conversation, and I will expect the same degree of precision in your essay. The best way to ensure that you write clearly is to keep your prose simple and direct. Don't try to make your writing "colorful." For instance, don't use metaphors -- just plainly say what it is you have to say. Also, avoid overstating what you have to say. Overstatement is common in everyday conversation but unacceptable in a philosophy paper. For instance, in conversation someone might say, "Everyone in the tropics is so relaxed." But, of course, not everyone living in the tropics is relaxed. So be careful when using words like "every" and "all." And avoid the following pitfalls:

**Bad Diction:** This is where a word is used inappropriately.
Example: "Rachels's argument is false." (Statements, claims, beliefs, etc. can all be true or false, but not arguments. Arguments are valid or invalid, sound or unsound.)

Example: "'All human lives are valuable' infers that the lives of permanently unconscious humans are valuable." (To infer is to draw some conclusion from a set of statements or facts. But to draw a conclusion is a mental activity that only rational beings are capable of. The statement "All human lives are valuable" has no mind and so cannot perform any mental activity, let alone that of infering. In this example, proper diction demands that the word "infers" be replaced with the word "implies."

**Vagueness**: This is where one fails to express what s/he means precisely.

Example: "Abortion is not the best solution to an unwanted pregnancy." (Does this mean that although you think that abortion is morally permissible, you believe that it would be preferable for women with unwanted pregnancies to carry them to term and then put their unwanted children up for adoption? Or, does this mean that you simply think that abortion is morally wrong?)

**Ambiguity**: This is where one uses a word that can have more than one meaning but fails to specify which meaning is intended.

Example: "A fetus is an innocent human being." (By claiming that a fetus is human, are you merely claiming that it is a member of the species *Homo sapiens*? Or, are you claiming that it is human in the morally relevant sense of that term, the sense in which we think we are human but someone in a persistent vegetative state is not?)

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**DEFINING YOUR TERMS**

A word must be defined if any of following apply: (1) it is a technical term that a layperson is not likely to know the meaning of; (2) it is an ordinary word whose meaning is not sufficiently clear or precise; or (3) it is an ordinary word that is going to be used to mean something other than what it ordinarily means (Martinich, 1996). So define technical terms like "intrinsic value," "prima facie wrong," and "hedonism." And define words like "euthanasia" and "abortion."
Although these are fairly ordinary words, they have no clear definition. For instance, in regards to abortion, it is not clear whether abortion necessarily involves killing the fetus. Can there be "live-birth" abortions? If a fetus is forcibly extracted by a physician and lives, was it an abortion? Our ordinary notion of abortion isn't precise enough to settle the issue.

Lastly, if you are going to use an ordinary word to mean something other than what it ordinarily means, you must make this clear to your reader. For instance, Peter Singer uses the word "person" to mean any rational, self-conscious being. Thus, as Singer defines "person," non-humans can be persons. Of course, it may seem odd to call anything but a human being a person. But this is only because Singer doesn't use "person" to mean what it ordinarily means. Yet there is nothing wrong with using an ordinary word in such a non-ordinary sense so long as you make it clear that you are doing so -- and Singer does (Singer, 1993).

**EXCLUDING THE IRRELEVANT**

The rule regarding what is relevant is as follows. Unless it provides necessary background or supports your thesis it is irrelevant. And if it is irrelevant, it does not belong in your paper! Even if some point is interesting and pertains to your general topic, it still doesn't belong in your paper unless it is part of the defense of your thesis.

To illustrate, let's suppose that you are writing a paper on euthanasia and your thesis is that active euthanasia is never morally permissible. Now one thing that would be relevant to such a paper is a definition of euthanasia. Although a definition of euthanasia does not itself support any thesis, it is, in this case, necessary background. However, you shouldn't discuss the public controversy over Dr. Kevorkian. For although such a discussion would probably be interesting, it is not relevant to your thesis -- Dr. Kevorkian assisted many people in committing suicide but never actively euthanized anyone.

**THE INTRODUCTION**

Get right down to business! Avoid inflated, rhetorical introductory remarks (commonly known as "fluff"). If, for instance, your paper is on abortion, you shouldn't waste limited space with
An introduction is best thought of as a reader's guide to your paper. It should help make it easier for the reader to follow and understand your paper. So it should define for the reader any important terminology. And it should include an explicit statement of what it is that you will be arguing for (that is, your thesis). Also, it is sometimes useful if the introduction maps out for the reader the structure of your paper, explaining the order in which you will argue for various points and then explaining how all those points come together in support of your thesis.

The following is an example of the type of introduction I am looking for (It is Mary Anne Warren's introduction to her paper "On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion" Beauchamp, et. Al., 1989):

We will be concerned with both the moral status of abortion, which for our purposes we may define as the act which a woman performs in voluntarily terminating, or allowing another person to terminate, her pregnancy, and the legal status which is appropriate for this act. I will argue that, while it is not possible to produce a satisfactory defense of a woman's right to obtain an abortion without showing that a fetus is not a human being, in the morally relevant sense of that term, we ought not to conclude that the difficulties involved in determining whether or not a fetus is human make it impossible to produce any satisfactory solution to the problem of the moral status of abortion. For it is possible to show that, on the basis of intuitions which we may expect even the opponents of abortion to share, a fetus is not a person, and hence not the sort of entity to which it is proper to ascribe full moral rights (ibid, 211).

YOUR AUDIENCE

You should imagine that you are writing, not for your instructor or TA, but for an intelligent and knowledgeable layperson who knows almost nothing about philosophy. Pretend, for instance, that you are writing for a roommate who hasn't taken the course. Thus you should explain all technical terms, and you should use examples wherever this will help to illustrate your points. Of course, you are actually writing for your instructor or TA -- that's who is going to read and grade it. So you may ask yourself, "Why do I have to explain terms that my instructor/TA is already quite familiar with?" The answer is that it is your job to demonstrate that you understand the relevant material. And you can do this best by showing that you can explain what you've learned to even someone who knows nothing about philosophy.
**QUOTING**

Do not rely on quotations as a means of making your points. Rather you should explain things using your own words. The ability to explain someone else's position using your own words demonstrates to the reader that you have a clear understanding of that person's viewpoint. Use quotations only in order to support a particular textual interpretation. So don't quote unless you intend to discuss the quoted passage and how it supports your interpretation of the author.

**PLAGIARISM**

Plagiarism is the act of using another person's ideas or expressions in your writing without acknowledging the source...to plagiarize is to give the impression that you have written or thought something that you have in fact borrowed from someone else.... Other forms of plagiarism include repeating someone else's particularly apt phrase without appropriate acknowledgment, paraphrasing another person's argument as your own, and presenting another's line of thinking as though it were your own.

If you are at all unclear about what counts as plagiarism, then you should see your Professor because plagiarism often carries severe penalties, ranging from an F on the assignment to expulsion from the university.

**STYLE AND LAYOUT**

Grammar, spelling, and punctuation do count. So be sure to proofread your paper for such mistakes. I recommend that you read your paper to yourself out loud. It is surprising how useful this technique is in discovering mistakes in your writing. For some reason the ear seems to be able to pick up mistakes that one fails to catch by simply proofreading silently. And be sure to spell authors' names correctly. For example, it's "Thomson" not "Thompson," and it's "Rachels" not "Rachel."
The presentation of your paper should exhibit the pride you take in your work. In other words, don't turn in a bunch of half crumbled sheets of paper which you haven't even bothered to staple together. Your paper should be neatly typed, double-spaced, in twelve-point font with one inch margins all around. But note that almost all Professors dislike plastic binders -- a staple is quite sufficient. **Always make and retain a photocopy of your paper.**

If you quote or paraphrase the words of another, you must give that person credit. And unless you are using outside sources (which is usually not recommended), this can be done simply by including in parentheses: the author's last name; space; date of publication; comma; space; the page number of the passage from which you are borrowing -- for example, (Thomson 1986, 38). For more information on citing your sources please see [refer to the current APA Manual.](#)

**GETTING HELP**

There are many sources of help available to students writing philosophy papers. Unfortunately, few students take advantage of these resources. This is a shame, because those who do seek help seem to get more out of the assignment while at the same time improving their grade. Attending office hours and participating in class discussions are probably two of the best ways to prepare yourself to write a philosophy paper. For it is important to discuss your ideas with someone of philosophical training. Doing so will make you aware of the kinds of objections that can be raised against your views and gives you a chance to practice defending your position.

A recommendation is to purchase William Strunk's [The Elements of Style, 3rd Edition](#). It sells for only a few dollars and is an excellent writing guide. However, you may want to save those few dollars and settle for a search query on the topic.

**HOW TO PROCEED**
Step One (Choose a topic): Choose a topic that interests you. Writing a philosophy paper is hard work, but it can also be interesting and rewarding when you write on an issue that intrigues you. Also, be sure that you write on a topic about which you have something to say. Don't write on a topic where you have nothing to add to what has already been said in the lectures and readings.

Step Two (Review the relevant course materials): Once you've chosen a topic go back over all the relevant course materials (e.g., lecture notes and readings) and make careful notes on all of the arguments presented. Then go over these arguments and jot down your ideas about them.

Step Three (Develop a thesis): Hopefully, after reviewing the course materials, you will have developed your own take on the issue. If not, then consider two philosophers with opposing viewpoints and try to work out which one has the more plausible position and why. In the process, you should develop your own position on the issue. This will be your thesis. Now work on articulating it as clearly and precisely as you can. But don't be afraid to revise your thesis as your paper develops. Often times, you'll find that your first thoughts on the matter aren't as defensible as they first seemed. In this case, you'll need to change your thesis to something that you can defend. Of course, your thesis needn't be a defense of any positive claim. Instead you can choose to defend a negative claim. For instance, your thesis can be that philosopher X's argument is unsound. This is a perfectly good thesis.

Step Four (Make an outline): Before you start writing it is important to make an outline. Your outline should sketch out all your arguments and map out the structure of your paper. Making an outline will save you time in the long run. All too often, if you haven't thought out your paper carefully enough in advance, you'll end up writing paragraphs and perhaps even pages of useless prose. For often you'll make false starts. You'll start out with one line of argument that will prove to be logically flawed. Other times, your premises will turn out to be indefensible. Expect to encounter such setbacks when writing a philosophy paper. Don't be afraid to start over from scratch if your paper isn't developing as you would like.
Step Five (Take a break): At this point, you should take a break (anywhere from a few days to a week) so that when you come back to paper you'll have a fresh perspective on it. This is an important step. You'll be surprised at how those arguments that seemed clear and well put a week ago now seem unclear and poorly stated.

Step Six (Go over your arguments with a critical eye): At this point you should come back to your paper refreshed. Now go over the arguments you outlined a week ago and look at them from the perspective of someone with the opposing viewpoint. Would they accept your premises? Would they accept your reasoning? How are they likely to respond to your arguments? What objections might they raise? Often it will be useful to seek out someone with a skeptical mind; it can be a friend, a parent, or the instructor. Ask them what they think of your arguments. Try to respond to whatever potential criticisms they come up with, and decide how to incorporate your responses into your paper. You might choose to address these objections as they surface. Alternatively, you can consider all potential objections at the end of your paper.

Step Seven (Write your paper): Write your paper following your outline. But save the introduction and conclusion for last. Write the introduction and conclusion together. They should mirror one another. The introduction should state your thesis and map out the structure of your paper. The conclusion should restate your thesis and rehearse the main line of argument.

Step Eight (Proofread your paper): After you finish writing, take a break again for a few days. Then go back to your paper and proofread it. Check that you phrased every sentence as clearly and precisely as you can. Don't be afraid to rewrite sentences and restructure paragraphs for the sake of clarity. Also check your paper for errors in spelling and grammar. I advise reading your paper out loud. The ear will often detect grammatical errors that you didn't pick up while proofreading silently.

OTHER GUIDES TO WRITING PHILOSOPHY

In print...


On the Web...


REFERENCE


This example is from A. P. Martinich, *Philosophical Writing*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996), 129.

This example is from Zachary Seech, *Writing Philosophy Papers*, 2nd ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1997), 41.


Ibid., 211.
What Is Your “Philosophy of Education”? 
[adapted from M. P. Sadker and D. M. Sadker, 

Each of us has a “philosophy of education,” a set of fundamental beliefs regarding how we think schools should be run. What is your “philosophy of education”? To begin thinking about this important question, read each of the following statements about the nature of education. Decide the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement and use the following numbers to express your response.

5  Agree strongly
4  Agree
3  Neutral
2  Disagree
1  Disagree strongly

____ 1. The curriculum of the schools should be subject-centered. In particular, student learning should be centered around basic subjects such as reading, writing, history, math, and science.

____ 2. The curriculum of the schools should focus on the great thinkers of the past.

____ 3. Many students learn best by engaging in real-world activities rather than by reading.
4. The students should be permitted to determine their own curriculum.

5. The curriculum of the schools should center around the interdisciplinary study of pressing social issues and problems.

6. The curriculum of the schools should be determined by information that is essential for all students to know.

7. Schools, above all, should develop students’ abilities to think deeply, analytically, and creatively; this is more important than developing their social skills or providing them with a useful body of knowledge about our ever-changing world.

8. Schools should prepare students for analyzing and solving the types of problems they will face outside the classroom.

9. Reality is determined by each individual’s perceptions. There is no objective and universal reality for which children must be prepared.

10. Schools are part of an interlocking network of institutions in an imperfect society. Teachers should develop students’ social consciences to help prepare them to become “change agents” as they reach adulthood.

11. Students should not be promoted from one grade to the next until they have read and mastered certain key material.

12. An effective education is not aimed at the immediate needs of the students or society.

13. The curriculum of a school should be built around the personal experiences and needs of the students.

14. Students who do not want to study much should not be required to.

15. Study of contemporary society and pressing social issues should not be confined to the classroom and grade advancement (esp. graduation) should depend, in part, on student participation in relevant social activities outside the school (e.g., community service).

16. Academic rigor is an essential component of education.

17. All students, regardless of ability, should study more or less the same curriculum.

18. Art classes should focus primarily on individual expression and creativity.

19. Effective learning is unstructured and informal.

20. Subject-area content material should be consciously related to the state of the world.

21. Effective schools assign a substantial amount of homework.
22. Education should focus on the discussion of timeless questions such as “What is truth?”

23. Since students learn effectively through social interaction, schools should plan for substantial social interaction in their curricula.

24. The purpose of the school is to help students understand themselves and find the meaning of their existence.

25. The purpose of the school is to reshape society by shaping children’s minds and values.

26. America must become more competitive economically with countries such as Japan, and schools have an affirmative obligation to bolster their academic requirements in order to facilitate such competition.

27. Students must be taught to appreciate learning primarily for its own sake rather than because it will help them in their careers.

28. Schools must place more emphasis on teaching about the concerns of women and minorities.

29. Each person has free will to develop as he or she sees fit.

30. Schools must help re-define social attitudes toward women and minorities.

31. American schools should attempt to instill traditional American values in students.

32. Teacher-guided discovery of profound truths is a key method of reaching students.

33. Students should be active participants in the learning process.

34. There are no external standards of beauty. Beauty is what an individual decides it to be.

35. Teachers should attempt to instill “progressive” values in students and should train them to view American society in a thoughtful and critical manner.

36. Schools must provide students with a firm grasp of basic facts regarding the books, people, and events that have shaped the American heritage.

37. Philosophy is ultimately at least as practical a subject to study as computer science.

38. Teachers must stress for students the relevance of what they are learning to their lives outside, as well as inside the classroom.

39. It is more important for a student to develop a positive self-concept than to learn a specific subject matter.

40. It is important for a student to see himself or herself as an agent for social change.
Write the number of your response to each statement in the spaces below. Add the numbers in each column to determine your initial attitudes toward key American philosophies of education. With which philosophy do you identify most strongly?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>Essentialism</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Perennialism</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>Progressivism</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>Existentialism</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>Reconstructionism</th>
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General Comparison of Liberal and Conservative Ideologies

adapted by John Bartelt

*Critical Issues in Education: Dialogues and Dialectics, by Nelson, Palonsky, & McCarthy*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIBERAL</th>
<th>CONSERVATIVE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We must embrace diversity and think critically.</td>
<td>We have lost our traditional moral and social compass.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Answers are often inherently contradictory, competing, or inconsistent.</td>
<td>The right answers are always simple, clear, and forceful.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Humans are inherently good, trustworthy, and responsible by nature, and need freedoms.</td>
<td>Humans are inherently flawed and/or sinful by nature, and need structure and rules.</td>
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<td>What's important is the process of thinking.</td>
<td>What's important is knowing the right answers.</td>
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<td>Democracy requires an enlightened public and free dissent.</td>
<td>Democracy requires social tradition and control.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cut class size.</td>
<td>Cut school expenses.</td>
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<td>Repair buildings.</td>
<td>Lower taxes.</td>
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<td>Allow more local control.</td>
<td>Impose more national standards.</td>
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<td>Educate about social concerns.</td>
<td>Stick to the basics.</td>
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<td>Give teachers more freedom.</td>
<td>Make teachers more accountable.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Make schools more collaborative and inclusive.</td>
<td>Increase individual competition for grades and awards.</td>
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<td>Schools should include social components such as medical exams, health instruction, lunch programs, multicultural education, and community involvement.</td>
<td>Schools should focus on traditional practices, rigid discipline, rote memorization and drill, rigor, classic American values, dress codes, and standardized tests.</td>
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<td>Crime and corruption are made worse by a lack of critical thought and involvement.</td>
<td>Crime and corruption are the result of progressive education and ideas.</td>
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<td>Bilingual education allows the child to learn content while learning English.</td>
<td>Full immersion forces the child to embrace traditional American values.</td>
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<td>Teachers should have a hand in creating their own curriculum, based on the individual needs and interests of their children.</td>
<td>The same curriculum should be proscribed for all, to ensure that teachers teach appropriate things consistently.</td>
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<td>We should teach world views.</td>
<td>We should teach a unified American view.</td>
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<td>Educators are generally good, and try to be sensitive to students' self-esteem</td>
<td>Educators are generally poor, and tend to brainwash students with alternative values.</td>
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<td>Current content standards are generally dull and lack a multicultural/world perspective.</td>
<td>Current content standards are insufficiently patriotic and overly-liberal.</td>
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<td>We should openly discuss the sex, religion, and politics of the world's peoples.</td>
<td>Discussing non-traditional sex, religion, and politics is morally destructive and unpatriotic.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unity is complacent, whereas diversity provides richness.</td>
<td>Unity provides a focus, whereas diversity invites dissention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Censorship of any kind is antithetical to critical thinking.</td>
<td>Censorship of diverse ideas is sometimes necessary to ensure the social order.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>