

## Topics for the Fourth Assignment (Term Paper)

Write a **2000 word** paper on one, and **only one**, of the topics below. **Make sure you follow the instructions also provided below (and elsewhere).** This fourth assignment (or term paper) is due on **March 30<sup>th</sup>**.

**This assignment will require both more research and critical analysis on your part.** Remember the **ARG** conditions for good argument (**the premises must be Acceptable, Relevant and they must (adequately) Ground (or support) the conclusion.** **Andrew's Rule of Thumb:** For any given claim that you are tempted to make, if you do not know the answer to the question 'How can I *adequately* defend this claim?', then don't make it. **Don't forget to adequately defend your interpretative claims or judgments!**

1. Is *hsiao* either a sufficient or necessary condition of living a morally acceptable life? Are there any problems with grounding the good life (i.e. the moral life) in *hsiao*? (Ensure that your discussion includes an adequate treatment of *Confucius' understanding of the nature of hsiao.*) Defend your answer.
2. *Must* an authentic Confucian perspective on the ideal society be inegalitarian (i.e. *must* it be classist or sexist)? Defend your answer.
3. Compare and contrast Lao Tzu's and Confucius' understanding of the good (or ideal) life (or person). Alternatively, compare and contrast Lao Tzu's and Confucius' views of good government.
4. Explain the Taoist notion of *wu-wei*. *Is wu-wei* relevantly similar to the notion of non-action contained in the *Gita*? Defend your answer. (Take care with this topic, it is not as easy as it sounds.)
5. Can we offer a better environmental ethic than what we often find offered in the 'West' if we ground it in a Taoist or Buddhist outlook? Defend your view.
6. Can Zen survive 'undiluted' in a Western social context? Alternatively, can an individual remain *thoroughly* 'Western' in some of their *fundamental* values, attitudes or beliefs and consistently practice Zen? (Note that these are two different questions.) Defend your answer.
7. *Is* the Zen view of Buddha Nature or Buddha Mind a way of re-introducing a metaphysical 'ground of being' akin to *Brahman* in Hinduism or the *Tao* in Taoism? Defend your answer.
8. Zen was closely associated with the Way of the Sword in medieval Japan. Did this compromise Zen Buddhism? In other words, could an individual live the life of a Samurai and yet maintain a 'healthy' or *authentic* Zen practice? Defend your answer.
9. **Develop your own term paper topic.** Ensure that it is *appropriate* for a course in (*Asian*) **philosophy**. Ensure that you **adequately defend** the claims that you make in your discussion. You *must* discuss your term paper topic with me *by the end of the second week in March* (this is an **absolute deadline** - so it's best to talk to me **well before** this deadline in case your suggested topic is not appropriate). **Any topic NOT okayed by me at that time will NOT be accepted as an appropriate focus for your fourth assignment (or term paper).**

### *Instructions*

1. Do not waste space on flowery introductions or digressions (e.g. facts about the philosopher's biography). **All I need to see in an introduction is a 'map' of the paper.**
2. Take care in your choice of words. **Do not unfairly portray the position of the philosopher or texts on whom or which you are focusing.** *Do not say anything false* about the philosopher's point of view, or the position advocated by the text.
3. *Do not make claims you do not (adequately) defend (even when they are claims of interpretation!)* Provide arguments for your conclusions (or statements/claims). Your arguments should show the reasonableness of the relevant conclusions (or statements/claims). Remember the **ARG** criteria for argument evaluation: Are your reasons or premises **Acceptable** (true or probably true [if in doubt defend them!]), **Relevant** (pertain to the truth or falsity of your conclusion [or statement/claim]), and do they (adequately) **Ground** (or support) your conclusion (or statement/claim)?
4. Your paper should demonstrate *your* knowledge of the relevant topic. Take care to avoid using direct quotes (**you should not use more than THREE direct quotes**). When using sources for your ideas other than yourself, *put them into your own words (remember, however, to properly footnote them)*.
5. Keep your discussion focused. **Stick to your chosen topic.** Do not try to cover too much material in your discussion. *Only move on to another point when you have adequately discussed the previous one.*
6. **Avoid clearly fallacious reasoning.** I.e. in defending your position: **Do not appeal to questionable** (or controversial) **authorities**; **Avoid mere appeals to the popularity of a belief**; **Avoid circular arguments**; **Avoid *ad hominem*s** (or mere character attacks/assassinations); **Avoid Red Herrings** (or irrelevancies); **Do not equivocate**; **Do not make hasty generalizations** (or unfounded broad-sweeping generalizations); **Avoid *non sequiturs*** (concluding something that does not follow from what you have provided as evidence); **Don't contradict yourself.**
7. In grading your assignment I am limited to what you clearly communicate in the course of your discussion. **Make sure you provide *clear* statements and defending arguments.**
8. Make sure to include footnotes *and* a bibliography. You can follow whatever manual of style you wish, **but you must be consistent and include all the relevant information** in your citations and bibliography. **Be forewarned, you will not get a good grade for an assignment that does not contain adequate citations.**
9. **Take care to avoid spelling mistakes and grammatical errors.** I will deduct marks for such errors if they interfere with the clarity or accuracy of your assignment. Properly proof read your assignment before submitting it.

Writing a good philosophy paper is an acquired skill. If you need help in writing your assignments I do recommend utilizing the Effective Writing Program at the Student Development Centre (UCC 210).