

# Critical Paper #2

PHILOSOPHY 1308

Due: THURSDAY MARCH 3

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## Summary

In this paper you will present an author's argument and critically evaluate it. Roughly half of your paper should be dedicated to a careful summary of the author's argument in your own words and the other half to your critique of the argument. Essentially you're defending an answer to this question: Is the author's argument successful?

## Formatting

The paper must be between 1200-1500 words. As a rough guide: 300 words is approximately 1 page double-spaced when using size 12 font, with a font like Times New Roman and 1 inch margins. Please do *not* list your name anywhere on the paper. **At the beginning of the paper, list only your Baylor ID number and the word count.** The paper should be emailed to lindsayrettler@gmail.com as a Word document or a pdf by the beginning of class (3:30 pm) on Thursday March 3.

## Paper Prompts

Choose one of the following prompts. If you prefer to write on something else, you need to approve the topic with me before turning in the paper.

- *Prompt A: Love and Risk*

Annette Baier's argues for at least two main claims in "Unsafe Loves": (1) that "there is no safe love", (2) we should not retreat from loving. Explain how she argues for these, then evaluate her arguments. Is she right? Why or why not?

- *Prompt B: The Insufficiency of the Natural Loves*

C.S. Lewis argues in "The Four Loves" that the natural loves are not self-sufficient: "William Morris wrote a poem called "Love is Enough" and someone is said to have reviewed it briefly in the words "It isn't." Such has been the burden of this book. The natural loves are not self-sufficient. Something else, at first vaguely described as "decency and common sense," but later revealed as goodness, and finally as the whole Christian life in one particular relation, must come to the help of the mere feeling if the feeling is to be kept sweet." Carefully explain what Lewis means by this claim, and present his argument for it. Then evaluate the argument. Is he right that the natural loves are insufficient on their own? What is his solution? Do you think it is the correct solution? Why or why not?

- *Prompt C: Wallace's "This is Water"*

What is the main point of David Foster Wallace's speech (i.e. what does he want his listeners to believe as a result), and how might the things that he says be turned into reasons to believe this main point? Is what he wants his listeners to believe true? Why or why not? Explain

- *Prompt D: Jesus and Affluence*

Evaluate Tom Crisp's argument in "Jesus and Affluence." What does he argue for in the paper, and what are his arguments? Is he right? Why or why not?

## Paper Structure

### 1. Introduction paragraph

Identify the author and argument that you will be evaluating, give a very brief statement of the author's argument and conclusion, then state your thesis. The thesis is a concise statement of your particular evaluation of the argument.

Here's a sample intro paragraph:

Carrie Jenkins argues that an act counts as flirting if and only if two conditions are met. First, the flirter must act with the intention to bring up the idea of romance or sex between the flirter and flirtee and secondly, the flirter must believe that the flirtee can respond in some way. She argues that this analysis best explains several paradigm cases of flirting and that it successfully rules out cases of accidental flirting. I will argue that Jenkins' analysis is wrong, because there are some cases in which the flirter does not actually intend to bring up the idea of romance or sex, and yet the flirter still counts as flirting. Therefore, having this sort of intention is not a necessary condition on flirting.

### 2. Exposition

In 2-3 paragraphs, explain the view and argument that you are evaluating. Start by clearly stating the conclusion of the argument. Then provide a summary of the premises in support of that conclusion and the reasons in favor of those premises. Of course you need to be selective, because you don't have space to talk about everything related to your topic. Pick out what is relevant to your critique. Summarize the arguments in such a way, that when you give your critique in the following sections, it is clear what your target is.

### 3. Critique

In 2-3 paragraphs, make a case for why you do or do not agree with the argument and conclusion your summarized above. If you are arguing that the argument is unsuccessful, then you must argue either that one or more of the premises is false, or that even if the premises are true, they do not support the conclusion. If you are arguing that the argument *is* successful, then you must defend it from at least two possible objections. Explain *why* the argument is successful.

*Note:* Do *not* simply state whatever reasons you think are for/against the position in question independent of engaging with particular arguments. Instead you must specifically interact with the arguments given by the author(s) you choose.

### 4. Conclusion paragraph

Briefly summarize what you've claimed in your evaluation. But don't simply repeat the introduction; come up with a new succinct way to capture what you've done in the paper.

## Grading

I will be grading your paper with respect to the following:

1. *Organization and structure:* There is a clear introduction, body, and conclusion. Each paragraph is centered around one central thought, and each successive paragraph suitably related to the preceding paragraph. Do not try to cover too many different things in one paragraph. Paragraphs should be between 3-6 sentences long.
2. *Clear and original thesis:* Your position in response to the author's argument is clearly stated in your introduction and is your own original contribution.
3. *Explanation of the author's arguments:* Your summary of other author or authors' arguments is clear and correctly interprets them.
4. *Good arguments for your position:* Your premises are well-defended and support your conclusion—i.e. your thesis statement.
5. *Clarity of expression:* A readable paper has well-formed sentences and few grammatical errors.