

Writing and Analysis in Philosophy Courses

(These guidelines do not necessarily apply to writing and analysis in your non-philosophy courses)

Grade	WRITING	ANALYSIS
A Excellent! AIM HERE	1. <u>Intro / thesis</u> : Your essay includes a clearly stated thesis, thereby announcing (at the outset) the broader point you wish to make in your essay. Your introductory remarks include sufficient background information needed for readers to understand the thesis and its importance (and hopefully, to generate interest). This thesis statement reflects what actually happens in your essay. 2. <u>Idea development</u>: • Clarity: The ideas discussed are fully developed. This means that examples are used; jargon is explained; quotations are properly set-up; ambiguous language is avoided; and in argumentative passages, it is clear how you intend the arguments to go (whether or not they are good arguments). Unlike with creative writing, in argumentative philosophy essays your readers are not encouraged to find their own subjective meaning; rather, your writing clarifies a single meaning. • Structure: The ideas are presented in orderly fashion – both within paragraphs, and between them. This means your discussion does not bounce back and forth between topics, nor between lines of reasoning. 3. <u>Readability</u>: Your sentences are free of spelling, grammatical, and punctuation errors. The sentences read easily. Verbal cues allow for smooth transitions of thought, both within and between paragraphs. ** For in-class Essay Exams, emphasize 2 – idea development **	1. <u>Success in supporting your thesis</u>: Your essay has a broader point (its thesis). The primary measure of success in an argumentative philosophy essay is the extent to which it supports that broader point. Even with in-class essay exams (which may not require a formal intro or thesis), you'll be <i>arguing</i> in the sense of trying to convince your reader (the grader) of your comprehension. Support your thesis and other claims – make the case! 2. <u>Comprehension of issues</u>: • Show and tell: Your aim is not merely to <i>have</i> high level comprehension, but to write everything needed to <i>exhibit</i> it. Grades are the result of sentence reading, not mind reading. • Depth of analysis: To write simply that "Plato is a rationalist", or that "Mill holds the greatest happiness principle," is to write something true but unilluminating – these don't exhibit much comprehension. Break these claims down and address the component concepts. Explain what the general happiness principle says; explain what Mill means by <i>happiness</i>; offer examples of actions that promote the general happiness, and actions that demote it. Analyze claims into their components and explain them. • Breadth of analysis: The range of issues actually addressed (and the quotations included, where relevant) encompass the range of issues that <i>should</i> be discussed, given the nature of the topics under consideration, and the nature of the assignment. This means that your essay neither strays into off-topic areas, nor ignores on-topic issues of importance.
B Good	Overall, your writing is a <u>good</u> performance relative to the above, "A" level goals. (It might be A level in some respects, while below B level in others.)	Overall, your analysis is a <u>good</u> performance relative to the above, "A" level goals. (It might be A level in some respects, while below B level in others.)
C Standard	Overall, your writing is a <u>standard</u> performance relative to the above, "A" level goals. (It might be above C level in some respects, and below it in others.)	Overall, your analysis is a <u>standard</u> performance relative to the above, "A" level goals. (It might be above C level in some respects, and below it in others.)
D Substandard	Overall, your writing is a <u>substandard</u> performance relative to the above, "A" level goals. (It might be above D level in some respects, and below it in others.)	Overall, your analysis is a <u>substandard</u> performance relative to the above, "A" level goals. (It might be above D level in some respects, and below it in others.)
E Unsatisfactory	Overall, this essay is <u>unsatisfactory writing</u> .	Overall, this essay provides <u>unsatisfactory analysis</u> .