

Phil 190: Final Paper Assignment

Fall, 2015

Instructions

The paper (6–12 pages long) is due, as an attachment, via the “Assignments” tool on eCommons, by midnight Tuesday, December 8 (in PDF or any format easily converted to PDF, e.g. MSWord, L^AT_EX, RTF, plain text).

The topics listed below are suggestions. If you want to write on another topic, feel free to do so. It might be a good idea, however, in that case, to check with me first. (Given that the topics are rather broad, you might want to check with me about your specific idea, anyway, which you are welcome to do.)

These suggested topics are aimed at producing interpretative papers, rather than critical ones — i.e., papers in which the focus is on understanding what Husserl means, rather than attacking (or defending) his views. (This is true even of the second topic, if you think about it.) In general I prefer that kind of paper, but if you have an idea along other lines you can go that way at your own risk. Again, you might want to check with me about the details.

Grading will be based on (1) interestingness and originality of your thesis; (2) carefulness of your reading (even if I don’t agree with it); (3) coherence of your argument/explanation (in roughly that order).

You can cite the assigned texts by page number, section number, or however else you find convenient. If you use any other source, make sure you acknowledge it and give enough information that I can find it. There’s no need for a separate bibliography or title page.

Obviously — I hope this goes without saying — you should not use sources without citing them! Also needless to say: the paper should be entirely your own work and should be a paper written for this course (i.e., not handed in for credit in any other course).¹

¹If you have any questions about policies on plagiarism and related issues, please see <http://www.ue.ucsc.edu/academic.integrity>.

You can find answers to some commonly asked questions about my assignments and grading in my FAQ (<http://people.ucsc.edu/~abestone/courses/faq.html>).

Suggested topics

1. Pick an issue which Husserl discusses in our readings from the *Logical Investigations* and explain how and why his view has changed, and how it hasn't, by the time of the *Ideas*. Are there subtle changes one might miss? Or: are there hidden continuities? (Either of those would be especially interesting.) Do changes in terminology obscure the issue? If so try to untangle them.
2. Pick some aspect of Husserl's views (in the *Logical Investigations*, the *Ideas*, or both) which seems to be wrong or confused. Explain why it seems wrong or confused. Then, explain how Husserl would defend it. (Note: there obviously might be objections against which Husserl would have no defense, or no good defense. This topic suggests not writing about those, but rather about the ones Husserl could meet. On the other hand, the objection had better be serious, or Husserl's response will not be interesting.)
3. Pick an outstanding contemporary and/or traditional epistemological problem and explain how Husserl intends to solve (or dissolve) it. If you are familiar with a historical figure who is also on Husserl's mind — for example: Descartes, Hume, Kant — you might do this by explaining how they frame a certain problem (based on the way Husserl likely interprets them), and then saying what Husserl thinks is correct in their statement and where he thinks they go wrong. (If you are not familiar with one of these, but would like to be, I can suggest readings.) Otherwise you can pick a problem you are familiar with from other literature or that you just vaguely know people tend to worry about, then make a case that Husserl is aware of that problem and show how he intends to address it. "Epistemological problem" should be taken broadly here to include problems about knowledge, certainty, justification, demonstrability, referentiality/intentionality, or anything else that seems closely related to those.