Socrates Project

Tutorial Handbook

Overview

This is a guide that I have partially written, and partially cribbed together from various sources, tailored specifically towards being a tutorial leader for intro philosophy. In the following pages you will find general advice about structuring your tutorial sessions, suggestions for tutorial activities, running discussions, dealing with problem students, grading, and whatever else I remembered to put in here. It is a work in progress

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Thinking about Tutorials

Being a tutorial leader for the first time will feel like getting thrown into the deep end. Where do we start? Let's first go back to the past. Think about tutorials that you have been a part of as a student. Write down something for each of the following questions:

1. What kinds of activities did you do during tutorial?

2. What were you favorite things about the tutorial?

3. What were your least favorite things about the tutorial?

4. What was the classroom environment like? (Open and welcoming? Were people nervous about participating? Did some people dominate discussion while others were silent?)

5. What do you think could have been done to have made your tutorial experience better?

Lesson Plan Elements

Okay, so now that we've refreshed our tutorial memory, let's think about how to plan the tutorial.

1. Pre-assessment

First, you're looking to figure out what the students already know, and what they're expected to know. The most obvious part of this will be determining what they read and discussed in the previous classes, and what parts of those readings and discussions they are expected to know in detail.

You also want to get a sense of how good of a grasp your students have on the big picture ideas when they get to class. A good idea to start off is to get someone to say something, in even the broadest terms, about what the topic was that week.

2. Learning Objective(s)

Next, you want to answer the question "what is the point of the session?" It focuses the session, identifying what the learners should be able to do by the end. Objectives might include something like:

- Getting clear on how Anselm argued for the existence of god
- Being able to identify a series of informal fallacies in arguments
- Being able to apply utilitarianism to case studies
- Etc.

This is something that you can write on the board, or mention at the beginning of the class.

3. Bridge

This element is also known as "the hook". It is intended to grab learners' attention, and provides them with some reason to be interested. The bridge is established at or near the beginning. Some ideas for hooking your audience:

Concrete image. Discussions can go better when specific references are made. Yet we often need help remembering the content of our text. Go around the table and ask each student to state one concrete image/scene/event/moment from the text that stands out. No analysis is necessary, just recollections and brief description. As each student reports, the collective images are listed on the board, thus providing a visual record of selected content from the text as a backdrop to the following discussion. Usually the recall of concrete scenes prompts further recollections, and a flood of images flows from the students. A follow-up question is to invite the class to study the items on the board, and ask: "what themes seem to emerge from these items?"; "what connects these images?"; "is there a pattern to our recollected events?"; "what is missing?" This is, obviously, an inductive approach to the text. Facts precede analysis. But also, everyone gets to say something early in class and every contribution gets written down to aid our collective memory and work.

- ➢ Was there a central example or thought experiment that was discussed in class? Something particularly controversial that came up? Something baffling? Something profound?

Sentence completion exercise. Students are asked to complete a sentence. You may ask them to write down their answers or to think on their feet. As students hear the others' responses they jot down the ones they would most like to hear more about. After all responses are given, students begin by asking other students about the responses they wanted to hear more about

- Could provide an answer to a general question, nothing jargon-related. So not something like "I think that reliabilism is ___".

Newspaper article. Select a newspaper article that highlights a real-world example of the topic of discussion. Or, have your learners bring in related newspaper articles.

- Easier for some topics than others. Values-based topics are probably easiest, or ones involving logical fallacies.

Strongly worded statement. This can be taken from the public domain, or created by the leader or a student. The statement should be provocative, even inflammatory (but not offensive). It should challenge assumptions that students take for granted or cling to fiercely. It is important to tell the class not to assume that the person introducing the opinion agrees with its sentiments. After the statement has been made, the conversation begins with group members trying to understand the reasoning and circumstances that frame the statement. Students are asked to come up with evidence and rationales that are completely outside their usual frames of reference.

Hat full of quotes. Prior to class, type out a number of quotes or short passages relevant to your discussion topic; these can be repeated. Then at the start of a discussion, have each student pick from the hat. Give them a moment to reflect on their quote or passage and write down their response. Then, ask each student to read their quote or passage and their comment on it. Those who have a quote or passage that has been read can either read their own comment or respond to one of the other comments.

4. Body of Session

Okay, so we know what the students know and what they're expected to know. We know what we want to accomplish in this tutorial session. We've got some kind of hook. Now we need to get the students working. The body comprises the major portion of your session. It is the learning experience, designed to help learners meet the learning objective you have set out for them. There are all kinds of things that you can do in the body of your session (we'll discuss a lot of them during the term).

General Guidelines

- Establish an objective for the discussion: to solve a problem, to offer alternatives, to develop a view. Students like to know why they're doing what they're doing.
- Divide the class into groups of 3-6 students. In a large group, there are fewer chances for everyone to speak.
- Try giving one or two students in each group the responsibility for timekeeping, recording, and reporting the outcome of the discussion to the rest of the class.
- Ensure that all the students in each group have the opportunity to participate.
- Don't allow a few students to dominate the discussion.

Walk around and listen in on the various groups; provide guidance, ensure their comments are relevant, but keep your participation to a minimum.

- You want to make sure that everyone is staying on track. If the group seems to be stalled, then ask them what they've come up with so far, and then offer suggestions about what else they might consider talking about.

Types of Group Discussions

After you have decided what the objectives for the discussion will be, choose the type of discussion that will best accomplish your goals.

Buzz groups. Students gather in small groups to discuss issues from a reading assignment. This can be relaxed and allow the group members to discuss the issues freely with no report back to the large group. It can also be more structured with group members having to answer a series of questions prepared by the instructor and report their answers to the large group (either the teacher summarizes or the group members summarize).

- ➢ An easy way to divide up discussions when there are multiple parts to an argument (consider: Aquinas' 5 ways lends itself to having 5 different groups discuss one way each).
- ➢ Or you can have different questions on the same topic and have groups address a different question and then share what they've discussed with the group as a whole.

Snowball Technique. Students respond to a question as individuals, then they pair up and discuss their responses. The group size continues to double every few minutes until the large group has been reformed.

- You could get everyone to take a stance on a position that would likely divide the class. Then pair up people with opposite views and see if you can get them to convince the other person. Then add more people, and more, until you're back to an entire group. Decide as a group who has the most reasons for the view.

Jigsaw. Teachers and students begin by generating a short list of topics they would like to study. Each student becomes an "expert" on one of these topics, first individually and then in discussion with other experts. Later, these students become responsible again, through dialogue, for helping non-experts to become as knowledgeable as they are.

- You could try to set this up a week in advance, and assign students certain parts of the text to become experts in. Or you could divide students into small groups, and have each member focus on a passage and explain it to the rest of the group.

Critical debate. Learners are asked to explore an idea or take a position that they find unfamiliar, unsympathetic, even objectionable. They do this as members of a debate team. Students are asked to make the strongest possible case for a position that is diametrically opposed to their own. It is a highly structured and provocative process for reinvigorating discussions that may have lost some of their verve.

Stand where you stand. The teacher shares a claim that references one side or another of an issue. Then students individually decide whether they agree or disagree with this claim and spend some time (between 5 and 10 minutes) writing down their position and their rationale for it, citing arguments, evidence, and quotes from readings. Then the teacher displays four signs around the room reading strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree. Students are asked to stand in front of the sign that most closely reflects their position and then students at each position take turns orally presenting arguments that support and justify the stance they have taken. They are then invited to move to another sign if the arguments they hear from their peers persuade them that another position is more accurate or defensible. The exercise ends by spending fifteen minutes discussing as a whole group how the activity altered their perspectives.

These are just some of the possible ways that you can run your tutorial session. We'll have lots of opportunities to discuss other types of activities throughout the year.

5. Close/Summary

This element summarizes the learning and provides closure for your learners. It is also important here to determine if your learners have understood your objective. Instruction can take group members in many different directions as they explore concepts, relationships and perspectives. It is essential that students leave with a sense of accomplishment and the main points. Some ideas:

- Students write briefly on how their thinking has changed as a result of the discussion. You can also ask students to put the session in the context of issues previously discussed. Have students turn in their paragraphs and review a sample to see what they have learned.
    - Possible exercise: ticket out the door. Pose a question about the material covered in that class, or one that gets them to think about material that you'll discuss next time. Have them write their answers down on a slip of paper and hand them in. Then consolidate their answers so you can discuss them next time.
- Return to objectives. At the end of the session, have your students return to your objectives. Ask them, either orally or in writing, to evaluate the discussion based on these objectives.
- Drawing conclusions. Have groups draw the development of the discussion using a chosen model (for example, a road map). Each group illustrates on flipchart paper the major points or ideas that were brought up through the course of the discussion. Students are then given the opportunity to view the work of other groups. These activities are extremely useful in determining whether your objectives were achieved through the discussion

Sample Tutorial Outline

Tutorial Date: ___________________ Topic: Descartes and skepticism, Meditations I and II

<table>
<tr><td>Pre-Assessment</td><td>Can someone recount what Descartes was trying to do in the first two Meditations? What was he meditating about, and why?</td></tr>
<tr><td>Learning Objectives</td><td>Let’s figure out why Descartes thinks we don’t know (hardly) anything, and why.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Bridge</td><td>Strongly worded statement: you know nothing at all. You don’t know your name, you don’t know any basic math, you’ve gained absolutely no knowledge at school and you never will.

Time: 10 mins for pre-assessment, learning objectives, and bridge</td></tr>
<tr><td>Body</td><td>Critical debate
- Two sides: you don’t know anything vs. you do know stuff

Discuss with the sides
- You don’t know anything side: how are you going to convince the other side that they don’t even know their own names? Or that 2+2=4?
- You do know stuff side: how are you going to address the wacky skeptical concerns that the other side is going to bring up?

Reconvene and discuss
- Why do we think that it’s so hard to argue against the skeptic?
- What kinds of standards are we setting for knowledge?
    o A good place to discuss foundationalism
- Are these the right standards? What might better ones be?

Time: 10 mins for groups to discuss, 15 minutes for debate, 10 minutes to discuss after reconvening as a class</td></tr>
<tr><td>Close</td><td>What do you think that you know now as a result of these discussions? More or less? Certain things but not others?

Time: 5 mins</td></tr>
</table>

Tutorial Date: ___________________ Topic: ____

Pre-Assessment	
Learning Objectives	
Bridge	
Body	
Close	

A Discussion about Discussions

There will be many times when you will want to discuss ideas as a class. This might be while you are setting up the session and trying to figure out what people know and are confused about, when you have students return to the large group after working in small groups, or whenever else. Discussions will generally involve posing questions to students and have them discuss their answers with the class. Discussions are not time to lecture. That being said, if someone says something wrong or just doesn't get it, you should take a few minutes to clear things up. In general, when running a discussion:

- *Ask questions*: you are not lecturing. Get students to try to provide the information.

- *Don't be worried about silence*: someone will pipe up eventually, since students find long silences way more uncomfortable than you do.

- *Ask questions that can be partially answered from information in the question itself*
    - Bad example: "What do you think Aristotle was on about in Nicomachean Ethics book 4?"
    - Good example: "What do you think Aristotle meant when he said ____"
    - Try not to use too much jargon in a single question. Example: a question like "how does fallibilism provide a solution to skeptical problems that are faced by foundationalists?" will lose three groups of students: those who don't know what fallibilism is, those who don't know what skeptical problems are, and those who don't know what foundationalism is. Keep your questions simple. Start with basic concepts, and build on them.

There are two things students are expected to do: go to class, and do the readings. You will have students who have done both, only one, and neither. You will have a mix of these students in your tutorial groups, and there will be no way of knowing which is which when you first get in there (although it may become clearer which students have which habits as the term progresses). So you need to make your questions general enough, and with enough information in the question itself, so that anyone, regardless of preparation, can answer.

- "So then why would anyone bother preparing at all if they don't need to?" Remember that tutorials are not tests, and that you are not responsible for how much work the student does outside of class.
- This does *not* mean that you should answer questions like "what was that entire article on again?" You are not the professor.

One way you can motivate students to be more prepared is by assigning participation grades. Keep a list of students on hand, and assign them each a grade depending on their participation for that class.

- I generally assign a grade from 0-2. 0 means they didn't show up; 1 means they showed up, but only contributed minimally; 2 means they contributed a good amount.

It is commonly said that "there is no such thing as a stupid question". This is false. But students should never be made to feel as if they are stupid for asking a question or giving the wrong answer. Here are some general guidelines in dealing with student questions:

- Praise the answer if it is deserving, emphasize the positive in a poor response, and make the student feel good about contributing.

    - It is okay to ask the student to state their question again, or to say more about their question if you didn't get it the first time

    - Often students will have questions, but won't precisely know what their question is. They'll be confused about something, but they can't quite put it into words. Your job is then to try to complete their thought for them. Make their question into a better one, and then ask them if that's what they were asking. And then give them praise for it.

    - Don't leave students hanging: if they are trying to ask a question make sure you work out what it is before moving on.

- Try posing questions for which you supply the answer almost immediately. In this case, the students have the satisfaction of answering to themselves, or at least of not responding incorrectly in front of the class.

- Ask questions and present what seems like a logical answer but which is wrong. Reason your way to the correct solution out loud with the students. The students then feel as if they are helping you arrive at the final answer even if no member of the class speaks (See section on Question and Answer Techniques).
    - Also: defend an argument that has a conclusion that students won't like. Walk them through an argument with reasonable sounding premises as if you really think the argument is a good one. Get them to figure out what they don't like about it.

- Finally, be available immediately after class and, of course, have time away from formal meetings when students are welcome to visit.

Be sensitive to student behaviour and non-verbal communication in the class. A lot of chattering or restless shuffling could indicate that the class does not understand something. Stop and ask for an explanation.

- It will be pretty obvious when people don't understand. If you're getting the sense that they don't, then stop and ask to see if people want you to go over something. If they don't, then no biggie.

Keep your jokes dorky and inoffensive.

Slow down. "Rapid fire" delivery often confuses the listener.

Creating a Welcoming Classroom

Think back to question 4 in section 1, namely: what were your tutorial classrooms like? Did you feel like it was welcoming? Did you feel nervous about talking? About giving the wrong answer? Now think about your answer to question 5: what do you think could have been done better?

Ideally, you want students to feel like they can express themselves and participate in discussions without being worried about saying the wrong thing. You should consider emphasizing the following points explicitly in your tutorials:

- *Cooperation, not competition*. Tutorials are not the time to figure out who's the "best philosopher" or who can win the most arguments. Tutorials are about working together to figure out hard problems.

- *Don't Be A Jerk*. Set out your expectations from the get go that talking over people, dominating discussion, having your phone go off, or goofing off on your laptop all qualifies as jerky behavior.

- *Tutorials are not tests*. Students should know that there's no penalty for giving a wrong answer, and that asking for clarification if they're confused is encouraged.

- *Lighten up*. Humour is a great way of enlivening a class or engaging students (if you use humour, make sure it is neither tasteless nor malicious).

- *Create a gender-sensitive classroom environment*. Make sure you're calling on different types of people with about equal frequency. Use language which is inclusive and examples which are appropriate and comfortable for everyone in the class.
    - It may seem harmless to say things like "hey guys" or whatever, but I've had more than one student in the past explain how they appreciated my neutralizing of pronouns. I do this generally in two ways: I say "y'all" instead of "you guys", although you can choose which term you like best ("peeps"?). Second, I neutralize gendered language in texts. This isn't something that you necessarily have to do, but it would be a good idea to indicate that when the author is talking about men that they really mean humans (unless they do, in fact, really mean men).

        - Studies have shown that women are more likely to participate equally in discussion if a woman is called on first. This is not to say that you have to always call on a female student first when running a discussion. But it is something to keep in mind if you find that discussions are being dominated by men.

Students will enjoy class more if you get to know them a little bit. Here are some suggestions for how to do this:

- Get to know your students' names and something about them. Students will often try harder, and consequently learn better, when they see that their teacher cares about them.
  - Nametags are a perfectly acceptable practice, especially in the first couple of weeks.

- Icebreaker games are a good idea for the first week of tutorials. Are they kind of dumb? Yes. Will everyone feel a bit dumb for participating? Yes. Does that matter? No. The point is to get everyone talking, and for you to learn a bit about them.

- Ask questions about your students' other classes and experiences, and help them connect learning in those situations to learning in your class, and vice versa.

- Praise students' efforts and remind them of their successes to encourage them. Sometimes students feel that they are failures if they have to come to the office for help.

- Ask your students about their study habits, and suggest ways in which they might study better both on a daily basis and for tests.

Ideas for Handling Nervousness

You've never done this before, so you're going to be nervous. That's okay! The best way to get over nervousness is time: after the first couple of times you'll feel much better. In the meantime, here are some things that can help you get over the jitters:

Assume a Confident Attitude

- Tell yourself you're 'psyched', not nervous.
- Remember that audiences often see nervousness as dynamism or energy.
- Act 'as if' you're not nervous (and you will be less so).
- Your attitude will probably determine the audience's response.

Concentrate on the Ideas

- Focus on the ideas (the content) that you're excited about, not on your nerves.
- If you care about the ideas, you will be able to speak about them.
- Think about what the audience wants to learn from you.

Make a Strong Start

- Talk to a couple of people in the audience before you start – they're just people like you!
- Take several slow, deep breaths, and then begin.
- Start with an easy to remember introduction to help you and the audience relax.

Practice

- Practice out loud, under conditions close to the real thing, several times before the day, to build your confidence.
- Have a least one practice session in the room you will teach in – get used to the physical surroundings and equipment.
- Do at least one dry run in front of an audience, even if it's just one person.

Use Audiovisual Aids

- I would not use PowerPoint at all. The point is not to lecture, it's to connect with the students.
- Put an agenda/outline for the class on the board – you and the students will both benefit – they'll feel better knowing what's coming next, and you will have some built-in 'don't forget' notes.

Visualize

- Visualize how your first class will go, as many athletes do before competing.
- Imagine what you will say, how you will say it, and the positive response you will get from your audience.

Dealing With a Disruptive Student

You will almost certainly not have to deal with anyone who is being extremely disruptive. Typically students will be disruptive by talking to each other, or by using their phones in class, or just not paying attention. Here are some things you can do to deal with a disruptive student:

- Call them out on whatever they're doing. Usually they feel embarrassed enough to stop. Don't dwell on it: call them out and then drop it. Don't lecture them about proper behavior the first time.

- If they don't stop, ask the student(s) more forcefully to refrain from such behaviour. Explain that it is inappropriate in a classroom and why.

- If the behaviour continues, you might try just staring at the student. Stop teaching. The other students will soon follow your lead. This quiet indication that the behaviour is unappreciated is sometimes enough to make the student quiet down.

- If all else fails, you are within your rights to ask the student to leave the room for the remainder of the class.

- It's really unlikely that things will go this far. If they do, it's a good idea to discuss it when we meet for the seminar.

- In general: set boundaries. Be Firm. Remain Calm.

It's never a bad idea to familiarize yourself with the UTSC Code of Conduct. You should never feel like you have to be in a position in which you feel unsafe.

Much more likely than the outwardly disruptive students will be two other types of students that you will have to deal with: the *monopolizing student* and the *quiet student*.

The monopolizing student is the one who has an answer for every question right or wrong (but often right). S/he blurts out the answer to every question before the other students have a chance. The answers can often be so thorough that there is little or no room for the other students to elaborate. How do you enable the other students to participate while still allowing the monopolizing student to do so, as well?

Possible Solutions:

- Ask questions that are directed towards a specific student (e.g. "Clara, what do you think?") rather than just questions that are thrown out to the group as a whole.

- Break the class into smaller groups. This provides most of the students the opportunity to talk since they will not be in the group with the monopolizing student in it. Also, make sure that the group that contains the monopolizing student isn't being dominated by that student.

- Ask some open-ended questions to which there are no right or wrong answers, just the opportunity to speculate. Allow the monopolizing student some time to state his/her position but then redirect the discussion to someone else (e.g. "That's very interesting, Martha. John, do you agree?").

- Talk to the monopolizing student alone after class or during office hours. Praise their enthusiasm. If the answers are usually good ones, praise this as well. Then, point out the difficulty of having a group discussion when all members of the group do not have equal opportunity to participate. Tell the student that you value their participation and would like it to continue but remind him/her that the other students also need a chance to speak and ask the monopolizing student to please respect this.

The Quiet Student is the opposite: they sit there and don't say anything, either in class or discussions. There is more than one reason why a student may be quiet. Some students are simply shy; they do not feel comfortable in a large group. Such students tend to speak more freely when the class is divided into small groups. Other students may just not feel comfortable speaking up, for whatever reason. You want to try to encourage quiet students to speak up, although you don't want to make them feel uncomfortable. With that in mind, here are a few suggestions about how to get a quiet student to speak:

- Assign each individual student a different question to prepare for the following week. This allows plenty of time for preparing an answer which in turn boosts confidence. Each student becomes in effect the class expert on his/her question which can also create confidence. It is not necessary to give every student a question each week. Choose a few different students every week, making sure each student gets a turn.

- During the tutorial pose a question to the class, but give everyone a few minutes to think about it and write down an answer. They can write down anything that comes to mind, as long as they write something. Then you can call on students to share what they wrote. Quiet students will often appreciate having more time to get their thoughts together before talking.

- When dividing the class into small discussion groups, assign one person in each group to be the spokesperson for the group to report to the class. A quiet student who has been given the role of spokesperson may feel more comfortable speaking in this situation since the views he/she is expressing are those of the group and not necessarily his/her own.

The Dreaded Discussion: Ten Ways to Start

(This is an article by P. Frederick from the journal *College Teaching*)

The conspiracy of silence is breaking up: we are learning to talk more openly about our joys and fears as teachers, our achievements and frustrations in the classroom. As I have listened to my colleagues talk about their students and their classrooms, the one fear and frustration mentioned more than any other, as for Henry Adams, was in leading a discussion. No matter how many articles on technique we read, or workshops we attend, the dreaded discussion continues to bother us more than any other part of our daily teaching lives. Freshman seminar and discussion-based core programs continue to develop. Pressures not only to "do more discussion" but to do it well, reinforced by student evaluations and faculty development centers, do not go away. We are learning, alas, that to walk into class and hold up one's copy of the assigned text, asking, "How'd you like it?" does not necessarily guarantee an enthusiastic, rewarding discussion.

We need, first of all, to acknowledge our fears in facing discussion classes: The terror of silences, the related challenges of the shy and dominant student, the overly-long dialogue between ourself and one combative student, the problems of digression and transitions, student fear of criticism, and our own fear of having to say "I don't know." Worst of all, perhaps, is the embarrassment of realizing, usually in retrospect, that "about half way through the period I lapsed, again, into lecture." I suspect that our fears about discussion (and our lapses) have a great deal to do with the issue of who controls the classroom. Although psychologically rooted, the control issue is best dealt with as a nitty-gritty practical question of how to plan and how to begin.

My first assumption is that an effective discussion, like almost anything, depends upon good planning. The content goals for any given class period usually suggest employing different teaching strategies. We would like to be able to select from among many discussion possibilities with confidence. The purpose of this article is to expand the range of the options by describing very precisely several different ways of starting a discussion. Like Henry Adams, we "devise schemes" to find out what our students are thinking.

The following assumptions and principles about discussions guide my particular schemes:

- Because we have much to learn from each other, all must be encouraged to participate.
- It is important to devise ways in which each student has something to say, especially early in the class period.
- Students should be expected to do some (often highly structured) thinking about a text or issue before the discussion class begins.
- Students should know and feel comfortable with each other and with the teacher. Those relationships are enhanced by a climate of trust, support, acceptance, and respect: even "wrong" answers are legitimate.
- A student's self-image is always affected by his or her participation in discussions: feedback, therefore, is crucial for self-esteem.

- The primary goal in any discussion is to enhance the understanding of some common topic or "text" (in the broadest sense).
- Different kinds of texts, purposes, and faculty teaching styles suggest using different kinds of discussion schemes. My hope and expectation is that other teachers will adapt these suggestions and devise schemes for their own texts, purpose, and teaching styles.

1. Goals and Values Testing
The students are asked to pair off and decide together what they think is the primary value of the particular text for the day, and how their consideration of it meshes with course goals. "Why are we reading this?" "Why now?" After five minutes or so, invite reactions. It is not necessary to hear from each pair, but hearing from a few provides a public reality test for the teacher's course goals ("is this text serving the purpose I had hoped it would?"), as well as providing a mutual basis for further probing into the text. An alternative initial question for the pairs is to ask for a list of relationships (comparisons and contrasts) between this text and another, usually the most recent one. Make the instructions explicit: "identify three themes common to both texts"; "suggest the two most obvious differences between the two texts"; "which did you like best and why?"; "make a list of as many comparisons (or contrasts) as you can in ten minutes." In this case, in order to benefit from the richness of diversity, as well as to confirm similar insights, it is probably best to check in with each pair.

2. Concrete Images
It is obvious, of course, that discussions go better when specific references are made. Yet I think we often need help remembering the content of our text. A few minutes at the beginning can guarantee that the sophisticated analysis we seek will be based on specific facts. Go around the table and ask each student to state one concrete image/scene/event/moment from the text that stands out. No analysis is necessary, just recollections and brief description. As each student reports, the collective images are listed on the board, thus providing a visual record of selected content from the text as a backdrop to the following discussion. Usually the recall of concrete scenes prompts further recollections, and a flood of images flows from the students. A follow-up question is to invite the class to study the items on the board, and ask: "what themes seem to emerge from these items?"; "what connects these images?"; "is there a pattern to our recollected events?"; "what is missing?" This is, obviously, an inductive approach to the text. Facts precede analysis. But also, everyone gets to say something early in class and every contribution gets written down to aid our collective memory and work.

3. Generating Questions
We have our own important questions to ask about a text. And we should ask them. But students also have their questions and they can learn to formulate better ones. Being able to ask the right questions about a particular text may be the first way of coming to terms with it. There are many ways of generating questions:

- Ask students ahead of time (Wednesday for Friday's class) to prepare one or two questions about their reading. One can vary the assignment by specifying different kinds of questions: open-ended, factual, clarifying, connective and relational, involving value conflicts, etc.
- As students walk into the classroom ask them to write down (probably anonymously early in the term) one or two discussible questions about the text. "What questions / issues/ problems do

you want this group to explore in the next hour about this reading?" Hand all questions to one student (a shy one, perhaps) who, at random, selects questions for class attention. Do not expect to get through all of them, but the discussion of two or three questions usually will deal with or touch on almost every other one. Students, like all of us, ask questions they really want to answer themselves, and they will make sure their point is made somehow.

- Same as above, except the teacher (or a student) takes a minute or two to categorize the questions and deals with them more systematically.
- Ask each student to write down one or two questions (either ahead of time or at the start of class), but in this case the student owns his/her questions and is in charge of leading the discussion until he/she feels there has been a satisfactory exploration of the issues. Start anywhere and go around the table. This obviously works best in smaller groups with longer periods than 50 minutes.
- Divide the class into pairs or small groups and charge each group to decide upon one salient question to put to the rest of the class.

4. Finding Illustrative Quotations

We do not often enough go to the text and read passages out loud together. Students, we are told, do not know how to read any more. If so, they need to practice and to see modeled good old-fashioned explication de texte. Ask each student, whether ahead of time or at the start of class, to find one or two quotations from the assigned text that he/she found particularly significant. There are many ways in which the instructions may be put: "find one quotation you especially liked and one you especially disliked." Or, "find a quotation which you think best illustrates the major thesis of the piece," or, "select a quote which suggests, to you, the key symbol of the larger text." After a few minutes of browsing (perhaps in small groups of three to four), the students will be ready to turn to specially marked passages, read out loud, and discuss. Be sure to pause long enough for everyone to find the right spot in their book: "start with the middle paragraph on page sixty one. Are you all with us?" Lively and illuminating discussion is guaranteed because not all students will find the same quotations to illustrate various instructions, nor, probably, will they all interpret the same passages the same way. It is during this exercise that I have had the most new insights into texts I had read many times previously. And there may be no more exciting (or modeling) experience than for students to witness their teacher discovering a new insight and going through the process of refining a previously held interpretation. "Great class today! I taught Doc Frederick something he didn't know."

5. Breaking into Smaller Groups

No matter the size of a class, sixty or six or one hundred and sixty, it can always be broken down into smaller groups of four, five, eight, fifteen, or whatever. The purpose, quite simply, is to enable more people to say something and to generate more ideas about a text or topic. Also, groups lend themselves usually to a lively, competitive spirit, whether asked to or not. We are interested not only in the few people we are grouped with but also in "what they're doing over there." Furthermore, reticent students often feel more confident in expressing themselves in a larger group after they have practiced the point with a safer, smaller audience. There are three crucial things to consider in helping small groups to work well. First, the instructions should be utterly clear, simple, and task oriented. Examples: "Decide together which of the brothers is the major character in the novel." "Which person in the Iliad best represents the qualities of a Greek hero?" "Which person, the same or different, best represents a hero

by your standards?" "Why did the experiment fail?" "What would you suggest changing?" "Identify the three main themes of this text." "What is Picasso's painting saying?" "Identify three positive and three negative qualities of King David's character." "What do you think is the crucial turning point in Malcom's life?" "If you were the company treasurer (lawyer), what decision would you make?" "Generate as big a list as you can of examples of sex role stereotyping in these first two chapters." "If you were Lincoln, what would you do?" In giving these instructions be sure to give the groups a sense of how much time they have to do their work. Second, I believe in varying the ways in which groups are formed in order to create different constituencies. Pair off ("with someone you don't know") one day; count off by fives around the room another; form groups of "about eight" around clumps of students sitting near one another on a third day. And third, vary the ways in which groups report out when reassembled.

Variations include:

- Each group reports orally, with the teacher recording results (if appropriate) on the board.
- Each group is given a piece of newsprint and felt pen upon which to record its decisions, which are then posted around the room.
- Space is provided for each group, when ready, to write their results on the blackboard.
- Each group keeps legible notes, which the teacher runs off and distributes to everyone for continuing discussion the next meeting.
- No reporting out is necessary, or reactions are invited from several groups, but not necessarily from all of them. Further possibilities for small groups are described in the suggestions that follow:

6. Generating Truth Statements

This exercise develops critical skills and generates a good deal of friendly rivalry among groups. The instructions to each group are to decide upon three statements known to be true about some particular issue. "It is true about slavery that..." "We have agreed that it is true about the welfare system that..." "It is true about international politics in the l950s that..." "We know it to be true about the theory of relativity that...", and so on. I have found this strategy useful in introducing a new topic, slavery, for example, where students may think they already know a great deal but the veracity of their assumptions demands examination. The complexity and ambiguity of knowledge is clearly revealed as students present their truth statements and other students raise questions about or refute them. The purpose of the exercise is to develop some true statements, perhaps, but mostly to generate a list of questions and of issues demanding further study. This provides an agenda for the unit. Sending students to the library is the usual next step, and they are quite charged up for research after the process of trying to generate truth statements.

7. Forced Debate

Although neither one of two polar sides of an issue obviously contains the whole truth, it is often desirable to force students to select one or the other of two opposite sides and to defend their choice. "Burke or Paine?" "Booker T. Washington or W.E.B. Du Bois?" "Are you for or against achieving racial balance in the schools?" "Should Nora have left or stayed?" "Who had the better argument: Creon or Antigone?" "Capitalism or Socialism for developing nations?" Once students have made their choice, which may be required prior to entering the room for class that day, I ask them to sit on one side of the table or room to represent their decision. Physical movement is important and sides need to face each

other. Once the students have actually, as it were, put their bodies on the line, they are more receptive to answering the question: "Why have you chosen to sit where you are?" Inevitably, there may be some few students who absolutely refuse (quite rightly) to choose one side or the other. If they persist, with reasons, create a space for a middle position. This adds a dimension to the debate and, as in the case of deciding between Burke and Paine on whether or not to support the French Revolution, those in the middle find out what it is like to attempt to remain neutral or undecided in heated, revolutionary times. I also invite students to feel free to change their place during a debate if they are so persuaded, which adds still another real (and sometimes chaotic) aspect to the experience.

8. Role Playing

This is a powerful learning strategy, guaranteed to motivate and animate most students and to confuse and make nervous many. Role-playing is tricky. It can be as simple (deceptively so) as asking two members of the class to volunteer to adopt the roles of two characters from a novel at a crucial point in their relationship, discussing how they feel about it, or what they should do next. Or two students can act out the President and an advisor debating some decision, or two slaves in the quarters at night discussing whether or not to attempt to run away, or a male and female (perhaps with reversed roles) discussing affirmative action or birth control. Issues involving value conflicts, moral choices, and timeless human dilemmas related to a student's world usually work best, but role playing need not be so personal. A colleague of mine in biology creates a student panel of foundation grant evaluators before whom other students present papers and make research proposals. Or, as students walk into class and sit down, they find a card in front of them which indicates the name of a character from a novel, or an historical personage, or even a concept. For the discussion that follows they are to be the role indicated on their card. Knowing this might happen is not a bad motivator to make sure students get their reading done.

Any situation involving multiple group conflicts is appropriate for role-playing. There are many simulation games for contemporary issues in the social sciences. But for history I like to create my own somewhat less elaborate "games" putting students into the many roles represented in some historical event or period. One of my favorites is a New England town meeting in 1779, in which a variety of groups (landed elite, yeoman farmers, Tory sympathizers, soldiers and riffraff, artisans, lawyers and ministers, etc.) are charged with drafting instructions for delegates to a state constitutional convention. Another is to challenge several groups in 1866, defeated Confederates, southern Unionists, northern Radical Republicans, northern moderates, and Black freedmen, to develop lists of goals and strategies for accomplishing them. I play an active role, as moderator of the town meeting or as President Johnson, organizing and monitoring the interactions that follow group causes. Our imagination can create many appropriate examples for role-playing. You have, I am sure, your own. But because role playing can be traumatic for some students and because a poorly-planned or poorly-monitored role play can get out of control, I want to make a few cautionary suggestions that I have found helpful, if not crucial.

First, except for finding the cards at the beginning of class which compel playing a role, in most role playing activities students should have some choice in how much to participate, either by deciding whether or not to volunteer or by being part of a group large enough to reduce the pressures on any one individual. Teachers should monitor carefully the unspoken signals of students who may find their role uncomfortable, and intervene, often by skillfully pursuing their own role, to extricate or reduce the

pressures on an actor. Generally, however, I have found role playing to be an effective way for the normally shy student, who has said little or nothing in class, to unblock in the new role and participate more readily in conventional discussions afterwards. Second, give students some time (how much depends upon the nature of the particular role-play) to prepare themselves for their role. This might mean two days or more in order to do some research, or fifteen minutes in groups to pool information, or five minutes to refresh one's memory about a character in a novel, or a couple of minutes simply to get in touch with the feelings of a character and situation. Third, in giving instructions the definition of roles to be played should be concrete and clear enough for students to get a handle on who they are playing, yet open enough for the expression of their own personality and interpretation. If the roles are prescribed too clearly, students merely imitate the character described (although sometimes this is the requirement) and have difficulty going beyond it with anything of themselves. If the roles are described too loosely, without a clear context, students will stray too far from the actual situation to be experienced and learned. And finally, and most importantly, in any role-play experience as much (if not more) time should be devoted to debriefing afterwards as for the exercise itself. This is when the substantive lessons of the experience are discovered, explored and confirmed. This is when those students who may have served as observers will offer their insights and analysis of what happened.

Above all, this is when the actors will need an opportunity to talk about how they felt in their roles and what they learned, both about themselves and about the substantive issues involved.

9. Non-structured Scene Setting

Most of the ways of starting a discussion described thus far involve a great deal of structure and direction. But inevitably, when teachers suspect that they have been dominating too much ("I blew it again, talked most of the hour!"), it is clearly time to give students an opportunity to take a discussion in their directions, and to do most, if not all, of the talking. The teacher, however, has a responsibility for setting the scene and getting class started. There are a variety of ways to do this, some more directive than others. Put some slides on a carousel and, without a word, show them at the beginning of class. Or, as the students walk into the classroom, the teacher plays a piece of music or a speech on a tape recorder. Or, on the board before class the teacher writes a quotation or two, or two or three questions, or a list of words or phrases or names, or even an agenda of issues to be explored. The only necessary verbal instructions are to make it clear to the students that until a defined time (perhaps the last five minutes) you, the teacher, intend to stay out of the discussion entirely. Even having said that, I have still found that I am capable of breaking my own contract and intervening or, more likely, affecting the class by non-verbal signals. I tell my students that I find it extremely difficult to stay uninvolved, and that I need their help in making sure I stay out of the discussion. They are usually happy to oblige. If possible, adopt an utterly non-evaluative observer role and take descriptive notes on the course of the discussion. To read your notes back to the students may be the most helpful feedback you can give them.

10. A Tenth Way to Start

As the term progresses students will have experienced many different exciting ways to start a discussion, most of which, we hope, enhance their understanding of a text or issue. Once the expectation of variety has been established there is even a legitimate place for the following strategy: stroll into class with your book, sit on the edge of the table, hold the book up, and ask: "How'd you like it?"

Although it has not been my primary purpose in this article to extol the many values of discussion, I assume that my basis has been implicitly clear. The key to effective retention of learning, I believe, is in owning the discovery. Emerson wrote in his journals that a wise person "must feel and teach that the best wisdom cannot be communicated (but) must be acquired by every soul for itself." My primary strategy as a teacher is to structure situations in which students have as many opportunities as possible to acquire wisdom for themselves; that is, to own the discovery of a new learning insight or connection and to express that discovery to others. In this way their substantive learning is increased and their self-esteem is enhanced. How we plan the start of class is crucial in achieving this goal. "Hey, roomie, I now know what Emerson meant by self-reliance. What I said in class about it today was that..." Which translated means: "Hey, I'm OK, I understand this stuff. I said something today others found helpful." Which translated means: "Class was good today: he let me talk."

Reference

Frederick, P. (1981). The dreaded discussion: Ten ways to start. College Teaching, 29(3), 109-114.

Grading

We will have more to say about grading specific assignments as they come up throughout the term. The majority of your time grading will be spent on essays. Like anything else, grading efficiently is a skill that will take practice. As a grade, you are looking to accomplish three major tasks:

1. *Assign the essay the grade it deserves*
2. *Explain to the student why they received that grade*
3. *Indicate how the student could improve on their next assignment*

Let's look at each of these components in detail.

Assigning the essay the grade it deserves

The professor may have created a grading rubric for their assignment; if they have, we will go over it together in the seminar. However, in general UTSC interprets grades in the following way:

GRADE	GRADE POINT VALUE	PERCENTAGE	DEFINITION
A+	4.0	90-100	Excellent
A	4.0	85-89	
A-	3.7	80-84	
B+	3.3	77-79	Good
B	3.0	73-76	
B-	2.7	70-72	
C+	2.3	67-69	Adequate
C	2.0	63-66	
C-	1.7	60-62	
D+	1.3	57-59	Marginal
D	1.0	53-56	
D-	0.7	50-52	
F	0.0	0-49	Inadequate; no credit obtained

So what does “Excellent”, “Good”, “Adequate”, “Marginal”, and “Inadequate” mean in the context of a philosophy essay? Again, this will vary slightly depending on the specific expectations of the professor. *In general*, though, you are looking for the following components:

1. *Getting the Structure Right*. Philosophy essays will always have the following components:

    - Thesis
    - Presentation of the arguments that will be discussed in the paper
    - The student’s argument for their thesis

Optional components may include:

- A presentation of an objection to the student’s argument and a response to that objection
- A conclusion summarizing – briefly – what the student did in the paper

Part of the student’s grade will thus depend on whether their essays have all the requisite components. Typically the biggest problem you’ll see in terms of structure is the lack of a definitive thesis statement. One final general component of the essay that might be the basis for a grade:

- Grammar and spelling. This will differ significantly depending on the standards of the professor. For example, some professors care about spelling and grammar only insofar as it inhibits how easy it is to understand what the student is writing, whereas others will deduct marks for every spelling and grammar mistake. Others will have specific requirements for style: some will not allow the use of personal pronouns, others will require that students adhere to specific styles of citation. Always mark according to the requirements set out by the assignment and professor.

2. *Getting the philosophy right*. Practically every essay assignment will require that students summarize the position that they are going to be discussing, and so a significant part of their grade will be determined by whether they did this well. This will involve a number of factors:

    - Did they accurately present the position of so-and-so?
    - Did they present the relevant steps of the relevant arguments in the right way?
    - Did they define the relevant terms properly?

Common pitfalls:

- Students will sometimes try to summarize an entire article/work of philosophy when they really only need to be focusing on part of it. In such cases you should remind the student in a comment that they should focus on only summarizing the parts of the readings that they need.

- Students will sometimes try to present arguments in "logical form" without knowing enough logic to do a good job of it. You can praise the student for trying to be as clear as possible, but remind them that one can be just as clear writing out arguments in words as in symbols.

- When employing a philosophical term students should say – briefly – what that term means. They often will just use terms in any old way they like. If they do so, point it out to them in comments.

3. *Making an argument*. By far the most difficult part of the essay for students. Arguments do not have to be ground-breaking. They do not have to be airtight, or knockdown. They do not have to address every possible objection that you might be able to come up with. In general, though, you should look for the following components when evaluating the strength of an argument:

- Are they consistently defending the position that they laid out in their thesis?

- Are they providing the reader with *reasons* to believe their thesis, and not merely expressing agreement or disagreement with a view?

- Have they attempted to come up with reasons *of their own*, and are not merely reporting arguments that they read in the text?

Common pitfalls:

- Many students will confuse what *they believe* with a *reason* to accept or reject a view. This is probably the most common type of "bad argument" that you'll see in papers, and is something that needs to be made explicit in the comments.

- Some students will have a hard time keeping their position consistent. Here is what will happen: students start out thinking that they're going to argue for *x*, but in the process of writing realize that there are maybe better reasons for thinking ~*x* instead. What they *should* do is go back and change their thesis to be about ~*x* instead, but they don't. If a student's paper is inconsistent in this way, point it out in the comments.

- Some of the readings will involve both arguments and responses to them, and so some students will present arguments that are just presentations of what's already in the text. Consider: a student is asked to write about Anselm's ontological argument, but their readings including both Anselm's argument and Gaunilo's response. Some students will then say that they're arguing against Anselm, and will do so by presenting Gaunilo's response. You should remind students that they are meant to come up with *their own arguments*, and not just regurgitate the ones from the text.
    - Students will say things like, "I didn't know what else to say, [response that was in the text] says everything already!" In that case, suggest that students scrutinize the response itself in more detail.

4. *Possible Additional Criteria*

As mentioned above, assigning the student the grade they deserve will in part be determined by the standards of the assignment and professor. We will discuss these possibilities as they arise.

Explain to the student why they received that grade and indicate how they can do better next time

While assigning the grade itself to the student tells them generally how well they've done, you also need to explain via comments why they received the grade that they did. There are two main types of comments that you will provide on essay:

1. In-text comments. These are for making comments on specific sentences, parts of sentences, or indicating where paragraphs or new sections of the essay should start or end. Some uses of in-text comments include:

    - Correcting errors in content: if a student has attributed the wrong view, or defined a term improperly, or summarized a view uncharitably, etc., then indicate where and how they have done so.

    - Correcting errors in presentation: if you cannot understand what a student is trying to say in a sentence, or if you get the gist of it but it's just expressed awkwardly or could be expressed better, indicate to the student where the trouble is. If it is not too much work to do so, indicate briefly how they could have written the sentence in a better way.

    - Correcting errors in style (if required): if it is part of the rubric to deduct points for spelling and/or grammar mistakes, then comment as to where these mistakes occur.

    - Praising good work: if the student does a good job of summarizing a view, presenting their argument, considering an objection, etc., then indicate where they've done good work.

2. Summary comments. These comments say something about the paper overall, and aim to justify why they received the grade they did. Some things to keep in mind when making summary comments:

    - Excellent (A-range) papers: you should obviously praise the student for a job well done, but no paper is perfect. Always give the student some advice about how they could do even better next time.

    - Good (B-range) papers: indicate both what the student did well and what they could improve on next time. If the paper is a B+ you might want to say what it was that kept it out of the A-range.

- Adequate (C-range) papers: these papers will typically have a couple of major problems. Make sure to indicate exactly what these problems are so that the student can make sure to address them for the next assignment. Be encouraging! It can be demoralizing to receive a C-range grade, so you want to make sure that the student doesn't feel like giving up.

- Marginal (D-range) and Inadequate (F) papers: when a paper is in this range something has gone very wrong. Summarize the major issues, but also recommend to the student that they seek assistance, either by visiting office hours, the writing clinic, or if you suspect that language proficiency is an issues, the English Language Development Centre.

    - *Failing grades should be reserved for only the most disastrous papers*. If the thing you have before you is the right length, says something about the topic, and tries to make an argument, then even though it might do all of those things poorly it should not fail.

General things to keep in mind when commenting

- Your comments should not be an essay in themselves, but you need to do enough to make sure that you justify the grade you assigned.

- Do not be exclusively critical: try to say something encouraging on every essay.

- If a student gets an 85 on an assignment and your only comment is "great job!" then they'll ask you why they didn't get a 90. Grades shouldn't be mysterious: you should say what they could have done better even when their essays are very good. For example, maybe they could have said more about X, or their argument was good but not terribly original, or they could have defined term Y better, etc.

Time Management

Again: efficient grading is a skill, and your first time through you'll take more time then you'll need. It will depend on how many hours you are allotted, but a general rule of thumb is that a short essay of around 1200 words should take you no more than **15 minutes** to grade all the way through. That may seem like an impossibly short of amount of time at first, but trust me you'll get there. If you are finding that you are routinely taking half an hour to grade a single paper then you need to *hurry up*. Here are some things to keep in mind while grading to get more efficient:

- Don't look for deep, hidden meaning. You are grading a student on what they have actually written, not what you think that they may have tried to write. Don't spend too much time analyzing sentences for meaning that might not be there. If the student has written something and it doesn't make sense to you on the third reading, then that is not an indication that their writing is over your head, it's an indication that they are doing a poor job of expressing themselves.

- If there are multiple essay topics, mark each topic in turn. Say students could write either on Descartes or Locke, and roughly half did the first and half did the second. In that case, mark all of one type of paper before moving on to the next one. That way you'll only have to keep one philosopher in your mind at a time.

- Get a bunch of grading done, but not all of it, at once. When you start grading papers you'll get into something of a *groove*. Use it! But once you start to feel yourself getting distracted, take a break: it's easy to get sloppy when you get too much into autopilot mode. What you don't want to do is mark an essay here, then do other work, go to class, etc., and then another one there, etc. This will just eat up more time as you'll have to get back into a grading mindset, pull up the assignments online, etc., each time you grade.

    - I usually set myself a grading task based on how many essays I have to mark. E.g. if I have to mark 40 then I'll do 5 sessions of 8. If I have a week to grade them then I'll do one session 3 days in a row, take a day off, then do 2 more. Something like that.

- Use a grading spreadsheet. You can download a spreadsheet containing your students. Do that, and use it to keep track of their grades throughout the term. It is also very useful to make sure that you are approximately hitting your target average as you grade.

    - For example, in Excel you can create a new column for an essay assignment, and then use the AVERAGE function to keep a running average of all the essays. If you find that your average is too low or too high, adjust.

Lower Your Standards But Not All The Way

First-time graders are almost always too harsh. This is because it is difficult to separate the standards that you are used to being subject to and the standards that are appropriate to subject a first-year philosophy student to. For example, if you take one of Prof. Boyd's third-year epistemology classes then you better write something that's crystal clear and brimming with originality. But that's not what we should expect from students who are 3 months out of high school and who still think that an essay ought to be exactly 5 paragraphs long.

That doesn't mean that you ought to let any old nonsense fly. But just because a student is not breaking new ground in, say, Descartes studies doesn't mean that their Meditations paper shouldn't still get a good grade.

Grade Comparatively

We will be benchmarking papers in the seminar to give you a better sense of what kinds of grades different types of papers deserve. These will also serve as guidelines for your additional grading. Did one of your benchmarked papers get a B, and the one you're marking now is a bit better? Then it's a B+. A bit worse? B-. You get the idea.

Problems

The biggest potential problem you'll face when grading is plagiarism. It is often not hard to detect, but here are some red flags to keep in mind:

- The student uses slightly different terminology than discussed in class or the text, or makes references to theories or concepts they don't cite and no one told them about. If a paper on Descartes starts going on about foundherentism as a theory of epistemic justification then that suggests they're copying something they shouldn't be.

- The writing is terrible, and then suddenly great. Rapid shifts in writing style or quality are hints that they're not the ones doing all the writing themselves.

- It's just all a little too good. If the essay seems way above the level of a standard first year that can mean one of two things: you have a fantastic student on your hand, or they didn't write the essay.

- Weird font changes, symbols in odd places, etc. These are subtle, and don't necessarily mean anything by themselves, but wonky text formatting can sometimes suggest a haphazard copy-paste from the internet.

- They list a source in their works cited (typically a webpage) but never cite it (or cite it improperly). Some students will try to get around the charge of plagiarism by copying from a website and then listing the website in their works cited, as if by acknowledging where they stole their essay from makes it not-stealing. Students are generally not good at discerning which sources are credible and which aren't, so be on the lookout for references to blogs or website where students upload their old papers.

There are potentially other factors that can also set off alarm bells. In general, when you suspect a student of plagiarizing, do the following:

- If you're using Turnitin, look at the originality report. There will be links to websites that contain matching material.

- Do some Googling. Copy and paste a sentence into Google and see what comes up.

- Document your findings. Copy the URL of the source, and highlight the areas of the essay that copy from it. Save this as a separate document.

- Don't grade the paper. If it's plagiarized, stop grading it. Don't make comments on it, and definitely do not accuse the student of plagiarizing in any comments.

- Pass it off. There are specific steps that have to be followed when dealing with plagiarists, but that's not up to you. Email the professor and let them know what's up, and they'll handle the rest.

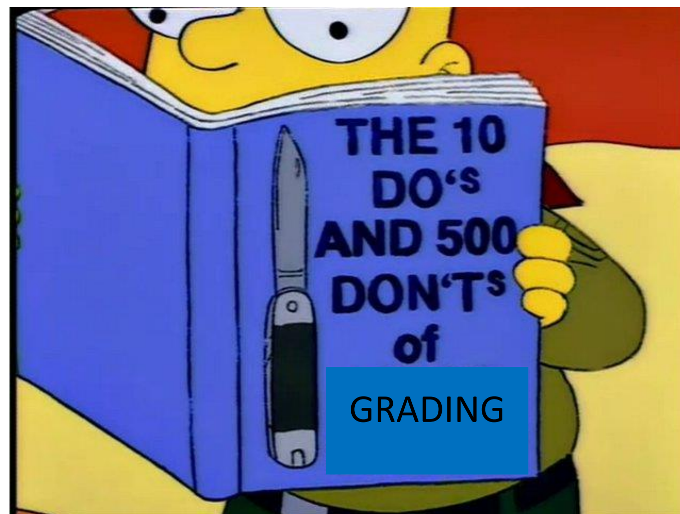
- Get over it. You'll have to deal with a plagiarizing student in your tutorial section for the rest of the term, but don't hold it against them during class.

Do Nots

- Don't complain about grading loudly in the philosophy portable or anywhere else on campus. If you want to kvetch about your student papers with friends in a private setting, that's your prerogative. But keep it private.

- Don't complain about your grading on social media. Can you believe that a student wrote this dumb thing? Probably; regardless, this is not something that you should be sharing online. Even general remarks about how grading is getting you down, making you fear for future generations, etc., should not be expressed online.

- Don't put it off until the last minute, or try to pull a grading all-nighter. You are going to get sloppy if you try to do it all at once. Stay on top of your schedule.



Sample Graded Essay

Against Cultural Relativism

The Cultural Relativist believes that “there is no measure of right and wrong other than the standards of one’s society”. In other words, the Cultural Relativist believes that the difference between right and wrong can vary, depending on the culture and, their moral standards.

You should state a clear thesis in your opening paragraph: “I will argue that we should not be cultural relativists because…”

Callatians

It is true that different cultures practice different measures of law. For example, in China eating a dog is not something that is uncommon in their culture but here in Canada, eating a dog would be frowned upon. Another exemplar of this is the different ways different cultures honor their fallen. For instance, the Greeks burn their dead, the Callatie eat the dead, and others burry their dead. Now it is not to say that either one of these methods is the wrong method, perhaps just a different method. For each of these disposal options the overall related goal of these cultures is to honour, or better yet to give respect to the fallen. Everyone has their own opinions, including different cultures and this shows that. Perhaps the Callatie believe that by eating the bodies they are honouring them in the best way possible, but in the opinion of the Greeks burning the bodies is the most honourable way to dispose of them.

The Cultural Relativist would explain this by saying that “different cultures have different moral codes, and these cultural moral codes determine what is right and what is wrong in a society”. I however, do not completely agree with the Cultural Relativist. The cultural Relativist makes a good point in saying that different cultures do things in different ways. When the health and the safety of the citizens in a culture is not threatened I completely agree, we must respect the morals differences and beliefs of other cultures, it creates cultural diversity, but when the lives of the citizens are endangered I feel we are not obligated to respect such actions. The concept of the Cultural Relativist tells us that in terms of respect we must not intervene on any cultural practice of another culture. Therefore, if the health or safety of a citizen is being threatened because of a certain cultures practices, we as non members of that culture must not intervene.

The idea of that is absurd and inhumane. A situation where such thing might occur could be a traditional practice in that culture. In this case, although pain is being inflicted on individuals in that culture, that culture could believe that it is necessary because of tradition. With that being said, just because certain things have been tradition in a country, does not mean it is beneficial to the country in today’s day and age. Countries undergo change, for the better very frequently. Often something a country or culture thought was beneficial to it’s citizens in the past turned out to be irrelevant. Therefor they changed that tradition, and this we can describe as growth in a country. An example of this is slavery. Very traditional in the olden days, but no longer exist in today’s society and it was for the better.

Be explicit about the point you’re arguing for: “A problem with cultural relativism is that it cannot make sense of moral progress, for the following reasons…”

You should not spend so much time on the details of this example: as this is a paper about the demerits of cultural relativism you should spend the majority of your time developing an argument.

On a more negative note, the practice of female genital mutation, most commonly found in parts of Africa. It was made illegal in Kenya in 2011, but it still continues behind the scenes. After being held down, and forced to undergo the procedure many women end up running away from their home towns and families. They do this in order to prevent their daughters from having to under go the same mutilations they did. When asked about her experience with this practice, Hedas from Eritrea, Africa says "In my culture, it is believed that when the vagina is cut, the desire to have sex is cut as well" (*MailOnline article by Lucy Waterlow*). Another child by the name of Damaris shares her story with *Lucy Waterlow at MailOnline.* She tells Lucy that she was 12 at the time of the incidence, and that she was unaware of what was happening. Damaris says that if she had known, she would have run away to avoid the mutilation. *Lucy Waterlow* writes that the procedure was done by 4 local women who had no medical history and no proper medical equipment. Damaris continues to tell Lucy, that after the procedure, her and the other 4 girls that were with her were taken to a small hut in the bushes. They had no choice but to stay there until they healed because they were incapable of running away, due to their extensive wounds. Not to long After Damaris was forced into an abusive marriage and shortly after gave birth to a child. Fearing that the same brutal experience would be forced upon her daughter, she ran away and found support from a charity called Action Aid. Damaris tells the reporter that in her culture girls who do not under the mutilation are considered to be unclean and promiscuous, and often excluded from their families. The cultural relativist is wrong.

The relativist would disagree! So you need to give more of an argument here as to *why* we should not agree with the relativist here.

This is an example of a cultural practice that we should not respect, nor accept because the lives of the citizens living in this culture are endangered. Even many of the citizens in the culture do no agree with this practice. There for doing what the Culture Relativist says, standing by and doing nothing isn't acceptable.

Cultural Relativist's response:

In regards to female genital mutilation, as outsiders of this culture we might find a practice like this horrendous. However other members of such culture would state that it is very beneficial. In this culture, marriage is a very important commitment. They believe that by getting the circumcision it decreases the woman's desire for sexual activity, thereby decreasing the number of her sexual partners before marriage. In this way she will be considered pure and clean when the time for marriage comes. Although painful, their belief is that the women will be satisfied with the long term results. So yes we might think that such practice might be useless, but to them it is very valuable.

Response to Culture Relativist

Not sure what this means

So this is an interesting thought: perhaps we should say that if we could achieve the same result without injury, then that would be okay. This is an argument that you could develop.

Human existence is derived from our progress. There are other ways to go about getting the same results of Female genital mutilation, without having to force teenage girls to undergo such brutal experiences. Any culture participating in this cruel practice would come to know this with just a bit of research. There are many incidents where this practice has resulted in death of the girls it is performed on, as well as endangering the lives of any future children that girl may have. The possibility of the deaths of young teenage girls should not be taken lightly, nor looked over, which is exactly what this practice does. Rachel's made an argument that stated that "if we can't condemn these practices of certain societies, and that the standard for right and wrong is determined only by our own society. The the idea of moral progress is called into doubt." He concludes by stating that Cultural Relativism is wrong, and I firmly agree.

Overall Comments

It seems that you have a good grasp on what the cultural relativist thinks, and what some of Rachels' complaints are. But you need to be more explicit about how you're going to go about arguing that we shouldn't be cultural relativists: if your main concern is whether the cultural relativist can make sense of moral progress, then focus on that, and consider a possible objection to that argument and respond; if you are predominantly concerned with establishing suffering as a kind of universal moral value, then focus on that. You seem to have some interesting ideas, especially at the end of your paper, but you should try to develop them more in depth. Remember: I am not interested in the fact that you agree or disagree with a position, but rather am interested in what you can effectively argue for.

Grade: 74

General Tutorial Leader Guidelines

Here are some guidelines that may sound like common sense, but are worth emphasizing. I don't want to have to deal with these problems and neither do your students.

- **Don't be late.** Show up early to your section. It looks bad if you're late.

- **Don't be hungover.** Fun plans can be saved for any day other than the night before your tutorial.

- **Dress relatively nicely.** Don't dress formally, but also don't wear a BBQ-stained Grateful Dead t-shirt with threadbare track pants. Aim for business casual: comfortable, but nice.

- **Don't date your students.** Don't flirt with your students. Don't do anything that would risk making your students uncomfortable.

Social Media

- Some of your students may try to add you on [insert names of popular social media here]. That might seem nice, because they want to be friends! But they're not your friends, they're your students.

- If you want to accept friend requests after the term is over, that's up to you. But during the term: don't interact with students through social media.

    - "But why not? I heard that so-and-so has their students as friends on Popular Social Media App/Website!" TAs will do this sometimes. I think it's a bad idea. My strong recommendation: don't.

PHLA10

In the fall semester you will be TAing for A10. This class focuses on introductions to kinds of arguments, some proofs for the existence of god and the philosophy of religion, baby epistemology and philosophy of mind, and a wee bit of metaphysics. There are a number of idiosyncrasies about the course to keep in mind:

- Tutorials start on week 3, and go to the end of term. There are 10 tutorial weeks in total.
- There is no official participation grade for the tutorials. So why should students both coming to tutorials? Their official motivation is to hand in their assignments: they have to hand in their assignments every tutorial to receive credit. So why should they stay?
    - Some of them won't! You will almost certainly get students who will get their friends to hand in their assignments for them, or who will drop off their assignment and then leave. This is basically unavoidable without official participation grades.
    - To make sure students actually show up, you need to make it clear that the whole purpose of tutorials is to help them understand the material better and do better in the course. You can emphasize that you'll be going over things like writing essays, reviewing material for the exam, and things like that. It's only good for them.

The first day

- Introduce yourself, and get the students to introduce themselves, too.
- Write your name and contact info on the board.
- Tell them what the tutorial is all about: every week you'll be discussing material covered in the class since the last time. You'll have the opportunity to get to know the material better via activities and discussion, and you'll have the chance to get clear on anything that you weren't clear on in class. You'll also discuss the assignments, writing essays, and all that good stuff. Tell students they should always have their readings with them in class.
- If anyone has questions about registration, get them to email you or the prof about it. Don't worry about dealing with admin questions during class time.
- Short icebreaker game to get to know everyone.
- Going over the material of the last couple of weeks, and a short activity. You'll have less time in the first week to do this because of the introductory stuff, but that's okay, since it'll be like a bit of a warmup.

Words of Wisdom from Former Socrates Project Students

What I Learned From My First Term

- **At the end of term, students dropped off**. Attendance in tutorials dropped, and the ones that did show up didn't really know what was going on, since they didn't go to class.

- **Students get desperate to get better grades near the end of term**. They grub for grades near the end of semester once they realize that they're not getting the grade they want.

- **Some students can become too argumentative once they get comfortable**. Once they get comfortable they can slip into jerky behavior.

- **Not all students are A+ students**. If you can help everyone get the big picture and understand the main ideas then you're doing a good job. If your students don't do as well as you hoped they'd do, that's not because you're bad at being a TA.

- **Students can *really* be reluctant to participate sometimes**. Students would sometimes rather sit in an awkward silence for fear of speaking up.

- **Grading is hard**. It's difficult to know, exactly, what the right grade to give is, or how much feedback to give.

Things I Wish I Knew Coming Into This

- **It's okay to not have the answer, or not to have it right away**. Students really aren't judging you in the way that you might have thought that they were.

- **Don't let bad behavior slide**. Whatever you let students get away with, they will do. So if you don't call them on using their phones in class, then they'll use their phones in class, to the maximum extent that you'll allow it.

- **It is difficult evaluating how much leniency to have on students**. Students will try to submit things late, but it's hard to know when to give them the benefit of the doubt.

- **Students really don't come to office hours**. Some of them do, but they usually don't. But that's okay: you can just do your own work during office hours if no one shows up.

Changes I Made This Term

- "I have made several changes to my teaching style this term; the first being that I now assert myself in the classroom more. I no longer let particular students dominate discussion, and when nobody wants to talk, I choose people. A consequence of this change is that many more students are getting the opportunity to have their voices heard during tutorials, which is conducive to establishing a better learning environment."

- "Another thing I have started to do is to have less structured group work and more open-concept discussion: 'open-concept' refers to the act of having students turn around to the people surrounding them and chatting about the topics."

- "I now use worksheets in almost all of my tutorial sessions. I believe that the worksheets help guide the discussions in tutorials in a variety of ways. First, students now have a resource to look at in case they forget the questions that I give to them while they are discussing. As silly as this sounds, in previous tutorial meetings it was not uncommon for a student to ask 'what are we supposed to be doing again?'"

- "Students also commented that they would appreciate more original examples or case studies. My initial train of thought was that students should get familiar with the examples given in class, and that novel examples may confuse them, but now I realize that this probably made the tutorials come off as repetitive."