

Essay topics

Write two 2 – 4 page essays, double spaced in Times New Roman 12 pt. font, on topics chosen from the list below. You may use quotations from our readings, either direct quotes or paraphrased in your own words. Give citations like this: [Author, page number] . Quotations should be no more than 10% of your essay. Email your completed essays as Word document attachments to svgsPhilosophy@gmail.com by midnight October 3, 2018. The subject of your email should be: **Philosophy Workshop Essays - Your full name**

1. On her deathbed, Weirob considers being told that “tomorrow, though I will be dead, someone else that looks and sounds and thinks just like me will be alive.” Why wouldn’t this comfort her, even if she believed it to be true? What do you think Derek Parfit would have to say to Weirob about her misgivings?
2. In *Meditation VI*, Descartes says “I, [that is, my mind, by which I am what I am], is entirely and truly distinct from my body, and may exist without it.” What arguments does he give for this? Formulate both arguments in normal form. Pick one of Descartes’ arguments, and critique it.
3. Imagine that Descartes and Princess Elisabeth had conducted their correspondence on today’s social media. Rewrite Elisabeth’s questions, and Descartes’ replies accordingly.
4. Formulate Locke’s criterion for personal identity in the form “Person B now and person A at an earlier time are numerically identical if and only if _____.” Explain in detail the criticisms Derek Parfit makes of this simple criterion, and how he suggests we should revise it.
5. Define philosophical behaviorism. Pick a specific example of a mental state. Give a list of dispositions to behave which the philosophical behaviorist might say is *identical* to that mental state. Describe at least one difficulty with identifying that mental state with any list of behavioral dispositions.
6. In the last section of J.J.C. Smart’s paper (which was not assigned reading), he considers several objections to his claim that sensations are identical to brain processes. List three of those objections. Rephrase Smart’s replies to those objections in your own words. Do you think Smart’s replies are adequate?
7. Explain Eric Olson’s version of animalism. What do you think Olson would say about a successful cerebral transplant which left your original body still alive (leaving behind the lower brain), and which replaced the damaged cerebrum of another person with your own. Who, on his account, would the survivors be?
8. Rewrite Dennett’s “Where am I?” story from the perspective of Hubert. Dennett introduces Hubert at the end of his story, but we learn that he has been running parallel to Yorick from the start, receiving all the same inputs Yorick gets, and faithfully duplicating Yorick’s outputs. Assume that Hubert is actually a supercomputer, a much faster and more powerful thinker than Yorick, dumbing himself down to duplicate Dennett.
9. Present your own criterion for personal identity. (You may use one of the criteria from the bifurcating key, or create a hybrid criterion from that list, or develop an entirely different criterion.) Explain what objection you have to at least 3 other criteria (you may pick 3 from the bifurcating key), and why those objections don’t apply to your own criterion.
10. Present your own theory of the nature of mind. (You may use one of the theories from the bifurcating key, or create a hybrid theory from that list, or develop an entirely different theory.) Explain what objection you have to at least 3 other theories (you may use 3 from the bifurcating key), and why those objections don’t apply to your own theory.