

**WRITING PHILOSOPHY: CRITICAL ANALYSIS**  
**Grading Criteria for Philosophy Essays**

You will be evaluated on your ability to clearly and concisely do the following:

- (1) State the relevant **thesis** -- that is, the main claim or idea -- of the view(s) you are explicating;
- (2) Give the **arguments** that (positively and/or negatively) support that thesis; and
- (3) Provide your own **evaluation** of the merits or demerits of the view.
  - (a) if the evaluation is *positive*, then you must explain the merits of the position (back to 1-2 above).
  - (b) If the evaluation is *negative*, then criticize this “opposing” view in such a way that explains why it is problematic (back to 1-2 above).

**This criteria is based on the objectives for reading, writing and revising philosophically which have already been provided.**

**THE PROCESS OF CRITICAL ANALYSIS IN MORE DETAIL...**

**Identify the following with depth and precision:**

**(1) THESIS**

- (a) What is the fundamental question being addressed?
  - (1) This may be stated in question form or not.
- (b) If stated in question form, the question should be definitively answered.

Note: (a) & (b) taken together form the thesis or claim that will be defended in the body of the work.

**(2) SUPPORTING ARGUMENTS**

- (a) What is the main (*positive*) *argument* used to defend the thesis?
  - (1) This should include at least one good example which demonstrates the relevancy of the thesis in some context. Therefore, an explanation of why the example does the work that it does should be included -- for this is what shows that the example has *philosophical* significance.
- (b) What is the main (*negative*) *critical argument* against an opposing view?
  - (1) This should include at least one good example that demonstrates how the opponent’s view is irrelevant, or fails to do the philosophical work that it purports to do.

**(3) YOUR EVALUATION (#2 above from your own point of view)**

- (a) Recall that after *reading* each article, you must ask yourself what the main reasons to accept or refute the author’s view would be.
  - (1) Also remember that a refutation is a critical argument against some view that is credible, but that is not as credible as some other view on the matter (e.g., yours).
- (b) When you are *writing*, formulate the arguments that *explain why* the view being evaluated has or lacks justification (i.e., address #2, don’t just state your conclusion).