

## 24.00 Fall 2023, Second Paper Assignment

**Instructions.** Write a 1,750 to 2,000 word paper on **one** of the topic questions (see next page).

**Deadline.** 11:59pm EST, Thursday, November 9<sup>th</sup>. A paper loses 1/3 of a grade per day it's late. (e.g. an A- grade paper will turn into a B, if it's two days late.)

**Submission.** Do not include your name on the submission. Please type your student ID #, the full topic question you are answering, and the word count at the top of your paper. This text doesn't count towards the 1,750 to 2,000 words. Please email your TA a copy of your essay by the deadline, and include somewhere in your email (e.g. in the subject line) your MIT ID-number.

**Citation/plagiarism.** See the syllabus for the class's plagiarism policy. All writing must be your own. Any text that's lifted verbatim from a source must appear in quotation marks and be appropriately referenced. Any text paraphrased from a source must be referenced too – changing the way something is worded does not make it your own writing. Citation style doesn't matter, provided it enables the reader to find the source you're using.

### Grading

Your instructors will be looking for:

#### *Clarity*

They will ask: At a sentence by sentence level, is the paper clearly written and easy to follow? At a structural level, is the paper well organized?

#### *Accuracy*

They will ask: Has the paper accurately represented the arguments given and positions taken in readings and lecture?

#### *Engagement*

They will ask: Is the author of this paper thinking through the issues for themselves (as opposed to, e.g., only repeating what was said in readings and lectures)? If so, how successful is the author?

**Writing Help:** The MIT Writing and Communication Center (WCC) offers free one-on-one professional advice from communication specialists with advanced degrees and publishing experience. The WCC can help you learn about all types of academic and professional writing and further develop your oral communication skills. You can learn more about WCC consultations at <https://cmsw.mit.edu/writing-and-communication-center/> and register with the online scheduler to make appointments through <https://mit.mywconline.com>.

## Questions

[1] The JTB analysis of knowledge says that an agent *S* knows a proposition *p* if and only if: *p* is true, *S* believes *p*, and *S* is justified in believing *p*. **First**, construct a Gettier-style counterexample to the JTB analysis, and briefly explain why your case shows that the JTB analysis is false. Your counterexample must be original to you – it should not be from lecture or recitation. **Then**, turn to the question of what Gettier's paper teaches us: can the JTB analysis of knowledge be repaired/replaced, or should we instead conclude that knowledge is unanalyzable? You might want to include discussion of Timothy Williamson's paper, but you do not have to.

[2] Suzy is walking home from work. She's wondering whether she ought to stop by Trader Joe's to buy juice. Suzy phones her roommate, Bob, to check: she asks Bob "do you know whether we have any orange juice?" Bob goes to the fridge, opens the door, and sees a gallon of orange-colored liquid labelled 'Orange Juice' standing on the shelf. Bob replies "I know that there is orange juice in the fridge". Outline a skeptical argument to the conclusion that Bob said something false. Then, describe what you take to be the best objection(s) to that argument. Do any of your objections defeat it? You might want to include discussion of Gail Stine's paper, but you do not have to.

[3] Sharon Street presents an argument to the conclusion that values aren't mind-independent. Reconstruct Street's argument and describe what you take to be the best objection(s) to it. Do any of them defeat her argument?

[4] According to Sarah McGrath, one cannot have knowledge about controversial moral matters: even if abortion is permissible, no one *knows* it's permissible; if abortion is impermissible, no one *knows* it's impermissible. Reconstruct McGrath's argument and describe what you take to be the best objection(s) to it. Do any of them defeat her argument? (Whether or not you think her argument is successful, at some point in your paper you should discuss the significance of her conclusion – why should we care if our controversial moral beliefs do not amount to knowledge?)

[5] Meet Laura. Laura is a 25-year-old American professional living a relatively ordinary, comfortable life. Laura spends her disposable income on projects and pursuits she finds valuable, meaningful and fun – videogames, nice haircuts, potted plants, tasty food and drink, and toys for her dog. She donates \$10 a month to support a YouTuber who makes enjoyable, educational videos, and \$5 a month to her local art museum. Peter Singer argues that Laura is doing something seriously morally wrong: she is morally obligated to give large quantities of her wealth to life-saving charities, but she is failing to do so. Reconstruct Singer's argument and describe what you take to be the best objection(s) to it. Do any of them defeat his argument?