

24.00 Fall 2023, Third Paper Assignment

Instructions. Write a 2,000 to 2,250 word paper on **one** of the topic questions (see next page).

Deadline. 11:59pm EST, **Monday December 11th (notice change from syllabus)**. 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 2,000 to 2,250 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] Here are two popular and plausible moral claims: (1) In Thomson's *Bystander* case, it's permissible to pull the lever, redirect the runaway trolley, and kill one person in order to save five; (2) in Foot/Thomson's *Surgery* case, it's not permissible to perform a surgery that kills one person in order to save five. Is there any good way of explaining why it's permissible to pull the lever but impermissible to do the surgery? (If you think there's no good way of accommodating both judgements, you should indicate which of the two judgements ought to be given up.)

[2] Van Inwagen argues that: (i) if determinism is true, none of us are able to do otherwise than what we actually do; and so (ii) if determinism is true, we do not have free will. Reconstruct Van Inwagen's argument and consider the best objection(s) to it. Do any of them defeat his argument? (You may wish to discuss Frankfurt-style objections to the idea that freedom requires an ability to do otherwise, but you do not have to.)

[3] Here are two theories of moral responsibility:

Deep Self View: S was morally responsible for Φ ing iff (i) S Φ d because she wanted to; and (ii) S's desire to Φ was endorsed by S's deeper self.

Sane Deep Self View: S was morally responsible for Φ ing iff (i) S Φ d because she wanted to; (ii) S's desire to Φ was endorsed by S's deeper self; and (iii) S's deeper self was sane.

First, describe why Wolf thinks the second theory is superior to the first theory. **Second**, assess Wolf's Sane Deep Self View. Is it a satisfying analysis of moral responsibility?

[4] Parfit describes a *Fission* case, and uses this case to argue that the identity relation is not what matters in survival – the existence of a future person who's numerically identical to you isn't what you really care about when you care about surviving. Reconstruct Parfit's argument, and consider what you take to be the best objection(s) to it. Do any of them defeat his argument? (You may want to include discussion of David Lewis's paper, but you do not have to.)

[5] In close consultation with your TA, you may write your own prompt and answer it. The prompt must be focused on some of the content we've covered in this course. **In order to answer this question, your TA must have officially approved of your prompt, and they must have done so by Monday December 4th (i.e. one week before the deadline).**