A Good Philosophy Paper…

- Explores a *single* topic in a clear, precise, and methodical manner.
- Is argued forthrightly and written with an economy of style.
- Makes clear its terminology, and uses said terminology consistently throughout the paper.
- Assumes an intelligent reader who is familiar with the rudiments of philosophy, but little else.
- Is edited such that the paper is coherent (sensible) and relevant (no tangents) throughout.
- Uses arguments and evidence to establish whether a belief/principle is worth holding/adhering to.

Know Your Paper:

- There are different types of philosophy papers. Knowing which type you’re writing can keep you on track:
  - *Thesis Defense* - you argue for the truth or rightness of a given position (your thesis).
  - *Compare-and-Contrast* - you explore the similarities and differences between two ideas/thinkers/concepts.
  - *Research* - you survey the important and/or influential views on a topic/theme/thinker.
  - *Summary* - you summarize the views of a thinker/movement/school.
  - *Explanatory* - you summarize and explain/contextualize the views of a thinker/movement/school.
### Writing Philosophy Papers (Cont’d)

#### Know Your Domain:
- The area of philosophy in which you’re writing will, by necessity, shape your paper. Consider the ‘big 5’:
  - *Metaphysics* - the study of reality.
  - *Axiology* - the study of value.
  - *Epistemology* - the study of knowledge.
  - *Logic* - the study of [correct] reasoning.
  - *Ethics* - the study of morality or the proper way of living.

#### Things to Remember:
- Arguments are your philosophical currency; your paper should be structured as a series supporting arguments in the service of a thesis or meta-argument.
- When critiquing an argument, ensure that you have a) summarized it for your reader, b) analyzed it accurately and with a degree of generosity, and c) considered the range of objections to the argument.
- Editing can save a weak paper and bolster a good one; consider spending at least a third of your time in the editing stage -- there’s a lot to be said for a *clean* and *clear* paper, not the least of which is solid grade!
Some Common Fallacies to Avoid:

- A fallacy is a type of erroneous reasoning. A fallacy can sink your paper. Avoid these common fallacies:
  - **Straw Man** - the deliberate misstatement of an argument/view in order to deflate it.
  - **Appeal to the Person** - the dismissing of an argument/view because of who is voicing it.
  - **Appeal to Popularity** - assuming an argument/view is justified because it is widely held.
  - **Begging the Question** - assuming the truth of your conclusion in your premises.
  - **False Dichotomy** - the [false] portrayal of opposing viewpoints as the only alternatives in a dilemma.
  - **Equivocation** - assigning multiple meanings to a single word in an argument.
  - **Naturalistic Fallacy** - the belief that because something is natural it is also good.

Bibliography: