

This assignment is due on Wednesday, May 31, by 4:00 p.m. You may turn in a copy of your paper either to Nina Davis or to me (my mail slot is in the metal mailboxes opposite the seventh floor elevator entry, HSS Bldg).

Write an essay of about four to six pages on one of the following topics.

1. If you go to the zoo and see animals that look exactly like zebras in the zebra cage, you would likely claim to know on the basis of the evidence of what you see that there are zebras in the zebra cage. Suppose you do make this claim, and suppose there are indeed zebras in the zebra cage. Now consider the epistemic possibility that, for all you know, there are painted mules in the zebra cage. Does this possibility undermine your claim to know that there are zebras in the zebra cage? Why or why not? Your discussion should include consideration of Robert Nozick's views advanced in his essay "Knowledge and Skepticism," or of David Lewis's views advanced in his "Elusive Knowledge," or both.

2. In *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Thomas Kuhn divides the history of a scientific discipline into periods of normal science carried out within an established framework or fundamental paradigm and periods of revolutionary crisis that end with the substitution of one fundamental paradigm for another. Of these scientific revolutions, he writes, "When paradigms enter, as they must, into a debate about paradigm choice, their role is necessarily circular. Each group uses its own paradigm to argue in that paradigm's defense." Of any such circular argument he notes, "It cannot be made logically or even probabilistically compelling for those who refuse to step into the circle" (p. 93). Kuhn appears to be saying that the transition to a new scientific paradigm is a form of religious conversion that cannot be justified by rational argument. Explain Kuhn's ideas of *paradigm*, *normal science*, and *scientific revolution*, and defend or criticize his account of the nature of scientific revolution.

3. In his essay "Conjectures and Refutations" Karl Popper proposes falsifiability as the test that separates science from pseudo-science, Einstein on the one hand from Marx, Adler, and Freud on the other. Elucidate Popper's proposed falsifiability test and evaluate its success in distinguishing genuine scientific theories from bogus theories such as astrology. Does Kuhn's defense of what he calls "normal science" in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* provide good reason to reject Popper's test or to modify our understanding of how to employ it? Or is it rather that Popper's proposed test reveals an inadequacy in Kuhn's account? Or should we hold Kuhn's and Popper's views together in a unified account?

4. A. J. Ayer's *Language, Truth and Logic* might be regarded as a critical attack on the philosophical methods, arguments and conclusions of Rene Descartes's *Meditations on First Philosophy*. Show how Ayer's analyses (if acceptable) undermine or rebut the main conclusions that Descartes reached, and either defend Ayer against Descartes or Descartes against Ayer.

Your essays will be graded according to the clarity of your prose, the soundness of the understanding of course materials that you display, and the cogency of your arguments.

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A brief guide to writing philosophy essays is available at the course web page.

Avoid long quotations from course texts. Use precise footnote references to help support your claims that the text says what you say it says. As always, you are expected to conform to conform to common-sense honesty and the UCSD policies regarding plagiarism.