

Philosophy of Religion
Spring 2015
Term Paper Assignment

Due Friday, April 24, 2015 (before 11:50pm)

Prompt: Is the fine-tuning argument for God's existence a better argument for God's existence than William Paley's design argument for God's existence?

This assignment will be submitted online through Turnitin on the course iLearn page. Follow the Turnitin link and follow instructions. Please save document in Word format and title file using your last and first name as follows: 500_last name_first name.doc or .docx

Assignment Clarified and Important Guidelines

Before writing your paper, please carefully read the following instructions. Before submitting your paper, go down this list and check off each after you have confirmed that your paper meets the requirement. If you find that there are parts you are not checking off, your paper is missing something that should be addressed before submitting it.

- (1) *Prompt Clarified.* Your paper should critically compare the more recent fine-tuning argument for God's existence and Paley's classical design argument for God's existence.
 - a. Explain the fine-tuning argument and Paley's argument. How are the arguments similar? How different?
 - b. In your critical evaluation, you should consider David Hume's objections to Paley's argument. Did Hume have a good objection to Paley's argument? If so, would his objection apply to the fine-tuning argument?
 - c. Make use of on-line course page materials on the Paley-Hume debate, as well as the fine-tuning argument.
- (2) *Need for Quotations.* Provide quotes where necessary. Your quotes allow you to show that you are familiar with the relevant textual sources and can develop an argument with sensitivity to primary sources.
- (3) *Thesis Statement.* Your thesis statement is your main point. It should be a response to the prompt. For example, *the fine-tuning argument is a better argument for God's existence than William Paley's design argument.*
- (4) *Your Argument:* You must provide reasons in support of your thesis. Try to limit yourself to one or two salient considerations and develop them well in your paper.
- (5) *Body of Paper.* Be sure that you use the body of the paper to clarify and provide clear and well-organized support for your thesis statement.

- a. Make sure that you accurately explain (i) the essential features of the classical design argument and the fine-tuning argument, (ii) what you regard as a significant weakness of Paley's argument, and (iii) why the fine-tuning argument does or does not improve on Paley's argument. If you think there are no problems with Paley's argument, you nonetheless need to find some basis for showing whether or not the fine-tuning argument is a better argument.
 - b. Be sure to demonstrate knowledge of the relevant source material, which includes Hume's criticisms of the Paley-style argument.
 - c. Have you used quotes and references to the text at the appropriate points to back up your claims from the text?
 - d. Does each paragraph have a clearly stated main point? Avoid extremely long paragraphs or paragraphs in which too many ideas are discussed.
 - e. Does the body of your paper make your argument clear? Here's a way to determine this. First, limit your argument to no more than two supporting reasons. Second, make sure that each paragraph makes a point that is clearly connected to one of your supporting reasons. This is sometimes most effectively accomplished by using one to two paragraphs (between introduction and conclusion) for every supporting reason. Also, make it very clear when a paragraph is simply explaining relevant concepts or viewpoints you are engaging rather than providing support for your own thesis.
- (6) *Introductory Paragraph and Conclusion.* These should be short, that is, no more than a few sentences. State your thesis in the introduction. Summarize your argument (thesis and supporting reasons) in the conclusion. Do not add additional points when you summarize your argument.
- (7) *Technical Requirements for the Paper.* Do not neglect!
- a. Your paper must be between 900 and 1,000 words, double-spaced, and **you must include a word count**, preferably at the end of your paper. You may go over the word limit, but do not go over 1,200 words.
 - b. Use a standard font such as Times Roman.
 - c. **Do not use any sources in addition to the course texts.** However, you may use notes, handouts, or power points from the course. Be sure to provide citations from any materials that are not your own.
 - d. For all quotations from the text, provide references by page number or chapter/verse.
 - e. Make sure your paper conforms to MLA format, including the requirement for a "works cited" page. If your paper fails to conform to MLA guidelines, your paper may be docked up to a whole letter grade. See the following for MLA guidelines: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

Professor Sudduth