

Philosophy First Semester Exam (and IB SL paper 1A) Checklist

Introduction

- Hook/attention grabber (least important bordering on unnecessary)
- Introduction of stimulus
- How stimulus relates to the chosen problem of philosophy
- Argument made by stimulus regarding this problem of philosophy
- Your thesis:
 - Is the argument made by the stimulus correct?
 - Specific position to be advocated by this paper
 - Preview of major supporting arguments

Argument

- Broad statement of theory
- Analysis of how the theory works (how the parts of the theory work together to produce a satisfactory explanation) This section should include:
 - Clear explanation in your own words of each significant element of the theory
 - Contextual definitions of any key terms used by the theory
 - Supporting quotations
 - Real life examples that illustrate the components of the theory
- Your argument for why the theory is effective. This section should include:
 - Reasons why the theory is effective
 - Quotes supporting these reasons
 - Real life examples supporting these reasons

Counter argument

A. Weakness as counter argument:

- Transitional statement that clearly indicates that the argument(s) to follow are potential weaknesses with the argument you are making in the paper
- Statement of weakness/problem with the theory supported by the paper
- Brief analysis (see above) of this weakness and supporting quote/real life example
- A clear statement of why this weakness is a problem for the theory supported by the paper
- If you are going to describe multiple weaknesses, repeat the process described above. I would not recommend doing more than two.

or/and

B. Alternate theory as counter argument

- Transitional statement indicating that some philosophers maintain x (the alternate theory) is a better explanation for the chosen problem of philosophy
- Brief analysis of how the alternate theory solves the problem of philosophy supported by quote/real life example.
- Your argument for why some say this theory offers a better solution to the chosen problem of philosophy (what it does that the other fails to do/how it avoids the problems of the other theory). This should include a quote/real life example.

Repair

If you chose A above:

- Transitional statement indicating that the weakness(es) can be overcome by the original theory
- Explanation of how the weakness can be overcome. This might be done by:
 - Explaining how the counter argument did not actually pose a significant problem to the original theory - this entails explaining the flaw in the counter argument and should be supported by quotes/real life examples
 - Explaining how the original theory might be modified so as to overcome the weakness. In this case you should:
 - Describe how the original theory would be modified, perhaps supporting this modification with a quote or real life example.
 - Explain how the modification *specifically* addresses the weakness described in the counter argument

- This process should be completed for each weakness you described in your counter argument.

If you chose B above:

- Transitional statement indicating the the alternate theory solves the problem of philosophy less effectively than the original theory
 - Explanation of weaknesses of the alternate theory supported by a quote/real world example
 - Explanation of how the original theory does not suffer from these weaknesses and indeed has advantages over the alternate theory (this should not repeat any part of your argument)
 - or,
 - Explanation of how the original theory might be modified so that it doesn't suffer from the weaknesses of the alternate theory and it a better explanation of the problem of philosophy than the alternate theory. Again, quotes and real life examples should be used as support

Conclusion

- Smoothly reconnect the stimulus to the problem of philosophy and indicate how this problem is solved (can be quite brief).

Command terms/Key writing concepts:

Analyze: Break down in order to bring out the essential elements or structure.

Describe: Give a detailed account.

Argument: The specific reasons why a theory works and how the theory has explanatory power. Not simply a description or a summary.

Explain: Give a detailed amount including reasons or causes.

Real life example: Support that illustrates a concept by proving a concrete example using/demonstrating in question the concept. Not a quote, but rather drawn from life or academic experience or current events.

Avoid trivial real life examples (such as my daughter, the spilt milk and the drunken goblins given in class).

ACAR format: Argument-Counter argument-Repair described above. Note that the description above can be modified and re-arranged, so long as the three key components (ACAR) are present.

Guidelines for use of quotes

- Always use the best source (listed from best to least best)
 - **Best:** Primary philosophical writing - someone's original idea (in unit 1 examples would include: Descartes, Jackson, Nagel to name just three)
 - **Next best:** Secondary philosophical writing - A writing explaining someone else's idea (in unit 1 this would be the Churchland article at the end of the packet)
 - **Next best:** A text book (in unit 1, this would be Rauhut)
 - **Only if no other source contains the needed information:**The teacher's lecture notes or teacher generated parts of the presentation
- Always quote only what is needed to make your argument (avoid long quotes)
- Always include enough of the text so that your quote makes sense
- Quotes may be edited, so long as the meaning of the original is not changed (indicate deletions with ellipsis and additions with brackets)
- Cite the quote with a parenthetical reference that includes the author's last name