

Paper Assignment #1: Theories of Well-Being

This paper assignment will be due via Canvas by Sunday, September 13th at 11:59 pm. It is worth 15% of your final grade. The paper must be between five and seven pages in length (approximately 1800 to 2500 words), double-spaced, in 12-point font.

What makes life good for the person who lives it? Your assignment is the following:

Explain and defend one of the following theories of well-being:

Quantitative hedonism, Qualitative hedonism, Mental State Theories (excluding hedonism), Actual Preference Theory, Ideal Preference Theory, Objective List Theory, Perfectionism

You should structure your essay as follows:

- (1) Begin with a very short introductory paragraph that explains why someone might care about the topic you are about to write on.
- (2) At the end of this introductory paragraph, you must include a thesis sentence—a sentence that states which theory of well-being is correct.
 - a. Examples of **good** thesis sentences: “I will argue that actual preference theory is correct”; “I will show that quantitative hedonism is true and that it has the resources to respond to the most serious objection to it.”
 - b. Examples of **bad** thesis sentences: “I will argue that qualitative hedonism is an interesting view of well-being”; “I will show that the objective list theory of well-being might be true.”
- (3) About half of your paper should be an explanation of and argument for your favored theory. Make sure to provide at least one example to show how the theory works.
- (4) You must consider one (and only one) strong objection to your argument. Make sure that the objection engages with the specific argument you have given for your view, rather than merely giving a reason to think that your view is false. It might help to imagine how someone who agrees with you about which theory of well-being is true might nonetheless object to the argument you have given. Do not give a weak or undeveloped objection: spend about one page explaining the objection. I recommend you describe an example to help you to make the objection as clear and forceful as possible.
- (5) You must respond to the objection you considered. When you respond to the objection, do not simply repeat your initial argument. Either try to explain in a new way why the objection is mistaken, or consider whether there is ‘some truth’ in the objection that calls for amending your initial argument slightly. If at this point in your writing process you discover that the objection is easy to dismiss, then you should seriously consider finding a stronger objection.

This is not a research paper, but a test of your ability to articulate and explain concepts and arguments we have been thinking about in class. It is not expected that

you look at any outside sources for help. If, however, you would like to read something about these arguments, you may want to take a look at the recommended articles that I have posted on Blackboard.

Obligatory note on plagiarism: *Anything* (this includes, of course, anything found on the internet) that you look at other than the assigned class reading must be listed in an attached bibliography. You must do this even if you believe that you did not learn anything from a particular source. If you do make use of an idea that you find by reading something, or by talking to someone, you must acknowledge this in a footnote. There is nothing at all wrong with getting help from others in any of these ways, but failure to acknowledge that you have done so is plagiarism and will be treated as such.