Grading Rubric for Paper Assignments

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A. Substance & Content

1. **Task Completion (20%):** (a) Stay on topic and (b) complete the entire task set forth by the instructor in the paper assignment. (Adding a few short things that are not particularly relevant to the assignment task will not necessarily hurt your grade, but it can if you spend too much space on it and then not enough on the real task at hand.)

   Very Poor/Fails | Poor | Okay | Good | Excellent

2. **Accuracy & Acumen (30%):** The paper should demonstrate an accurate understanding of the material from class and, if applicable, philosophical acuity in evaluating it. (Remember that accuracy is still important regarding fine details and even minor differences in words can drastically change the meaning of a sentence.)

   Very Poor/Fails | Poor | Okay | Good | Excellent

3. **Depth & Coverage (30%):** Move beyond simple description and summary and reflect an in-depth understanding of the topic and material. Be sure to discuss all and only the relevant points (roughly, what is crucial for understanding the issue at hand and your thesis). A good essay goes beyond a typed up version of your class notes by demonstrating that you know how all the material connects together conceptually (e.g. by using examples when appropriate to illustrate key ideas). Imagine your reader is someone who hasn't taken this class. Think: "If my friend read this, would he or she be able to understand exactly what's going on?" This will help you demonstrate your understanding of the material.

   Very Poor/Fails | Poor | Okay | Good | Excellent

B. Structure, Mechanics, and Style

4. **Introduction & Thesis Statement (5%):** The introductory paragraph(s) should briefly orient the reader to the topic and provide a conceptual map of the rest of the paper. Avoid lengthy or dramatic introductions. The paper should have a clear thesis statement (which is usually best stated toward the end of the introduction) that addresses the paper topic and expresses an interesting claim intend to defend. Make sure your thesis statement is clear, specific, declarative, and on-topic.

   Very Poor/Fails | Poor | Okay | Good | Excellent

5. **Structure & Organization (10%):** The body of the paper should aim to support the paper's thesis with appropriate and ample evidence grounded in your own thoughts but also the class readings, lectures, and (if appropriate) outside sources. The body paragraphs should be organized in a logical manner, appropriate in length, and ideally framed by topic sentences. (Note: The paper may have a short conclusion/summary, but it's *not* required.) Use quotations as needed to ground your discussion of someone's view, but don't rely too heavily on them. When you use quotes, introduce them; don't just insert them without any explanation of who said it and what the relevance is.

   Very Poor/Fails | Poor | Okay | Good | Excellent

6. **Style & Writing Mechanics (5%):** Overall, the paper should demonstrate a command of the writing process and the author's care in crafting it. Use good citation practices (e.g. provide full bibliographic details). Avoid many errors of spelling, punctuation, grammar, sentence structure, verb tense, and vocabulary. But don't worry about being fancy with your writing style in philosophy (e.g. avoid flowery prose and vague language). The clarity and organization of your thoughts is most important.

   Very Poor/Fails | Poor | Okay | Good | Excellent

Grade:

Additional Comments: