A.   Time Schedule for Academic Papers

	Phases	Time required
	Beginning of work on paper	
1.	Find a topic	
2.	Agree on topic (with supervisor)	
3.	Set up time schedule	
4.	Orientational reading	
5.	Formulate research question/hypothesis	
6.	On-topic reading	
7.	Prepare outline	
8.	Discuss research question and outline	
9.	Revise research question and outline if required	
10.	Writing phase	
11.	Rest period – have paper counter-checked	
12.	Revision and corrections	
	Submission of the paper	

Things to consider when setting up the time schedule:

- Which steps involve others and their time – where am I dependent on their planning? (e.g. consultations with supervisor)

- Plan realistically: How much time is actually available?

- Schedule time cushions

B.   How Do I Find a Topic For My Paper?

(Pro-)seminar papers in Philosophy may be framed

   a) **argumentatively** (formulation, argumentation, and discussion of a hypothesis)

   or

   b)   **exegetically** (exposition of a term, a hypothesis, an argument, a ‚theory')

1. Scope: Seminar topic

The topic of the seminar paper has to be within the framework of the overall topic of the seminar.
The topic of the seminar paper has to be discussed with and agreed upon by the respective supervisor.

2. Points of reference

a) Seminar schedule

The topic of the seminar paper may take up a problem that was thematised in one of the seminar sessions.

* Which session did I find particularly interesting?
* Which session left me with some unanswered questions?
* What would I have liked to expand upon?
* Which session appeared to be of key importance to me?
* Which session was easiest for me to follow?

b) Your own notes

The topic of a seminar paper may take up a question that has arisen in relation with one of the sessions.

* Which questions arose for me within the framework of the seminar?
* Which aspect / claim / thematic issue in the seminar provoked my dissent?
* What struck me as particularly interesting?
* Which issues remain unclear to me?
* Which common thread did I discover in the course of the seminar?
* What did I not understand?

c) „Homework"

The topic of the seminar paper may address a question which was given as homework within the seminar.

- Which homework was particularly difficult / easy for me?
- Which questions provided me with more material than I was able to write?
- Which issues from the homework would I have liked to expand upon?
- Which question from the homework would I answer differently now, after the conclusion of the seminar, than I did at that time?

d) References

The topic of the seminar paper may address a text recommended as additional reading in the seminar.

- Which text from the course materials would I have liked to discuss further?
- Which text was I particularly interested in?
- Which text would I like to read?
- Which text from the secondary material appears to be particularly important?
- Which text did I understand well / not at all?
- Which text do I disagree with?

C. How to Phrase a Research Question

Topic of seminar
↓
Topic of seminar paper
↓
Research question: Hypothesis
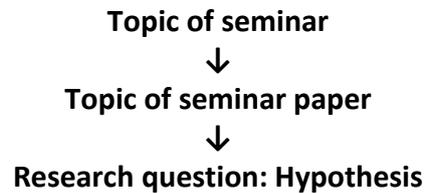
In proseminar papers, the goal is to phrase a research question within the chosen topic. One or several hypotheses may provide answers to this question. In the paper, the respective thesis or theses are to be stated and substantiated. A hypotheis is a claim about

a) the correct anwer to a (normative) question
(*argumentatively* oriented paper)

b) the substance of a term, the contents of a text, the structure of an argument
(*exegetically* oriented paper)

Examples:

Seminar topic:
Richard Hare, Moral Thinking

Topic of seminar paper:
Hare's method of moral thinking

Research question:
How do the two levels of moral thinking differ and
which function do they have in the justification of moral judgments?

Seminar topic:
Habermas' Discourse Ethics

Topic of seminar paper:
Discourse ethics as formalistic ethics

Research question:
Is Vittorio Hösle's critique of the formalism of discourse ethics convincing?

Suitable research questions frequently result from intense involvement with texts that are relevant for the topic. It is helpful to keep the following points in mind while reading:

- Which questions and problems are discussed?

- Which hypotheses are explicitly established? Which claims are explicitly stated? Are any hypotheses established at all?

- Which arguments are drawn on to justify these hypotheses? What are their premises and which conclusions are drawn from them? Are there ungrounded claims?

- Are the hypotheses philosophically valid? Are there fallacies? Are there other or better arguments for the hypotheses in question?

Two kinds of research questions:

1. Explanatory (exegetic):

„X claims Y."

→ What exactly does X mean by this claim?
(elucidation of the hypothesis)

→ What is meant by Y?
(elucidation of a term)

→ How does X justify his claim?
(elucidation of an argument)

2. Argumentative:

„X claims Y."

→ Ist his claim correct?
(evaluation of a hypothesis)

→ Is the line of argumentation of X regarding y convincing?
(evaluation of an argument)

Exercise on topic finding

Below is a list of 15 topics with suggested research questions for (pro-)seminar papers. For each topic and associated research question please consider which of the listed criteria are fulfilled, or not fulfilled, respectively (please check the boxes).

1. Wittgenstein – The paper analyses the relation between the early and the late Wittgenstein.

☐ clear research question   ☐ philosophical topic
☐ unclear research question   ☐ not a philosophical topic
☐ too broad in scope
☐ too narrow in scope
☐ appropriate in scope

2. Organ trade – The paper analyses whether there is an ethical justification for organ trade.

☐ clear research question   ☐ philosophical topic
☐ unclear research question   ☐ not a philosophical topic
☐ too broad in scope
☐ too narrow in scope
☐ appropriate in scope

3. Moral Relativism – The paper defends moral relativism.

☐ clear research question   ☐ philosophical topic
☐ unclear research question   ☐ not a philosophical topic
☐ too broad in scope
☐ too narrow in scope
☐ appropriate in scope

4. Meaning – The paper reconstructs Quine's arguments for the indeterminacy of meaning in his essay "Ontological Relativity".

☐ clear research question   ☐ philosophical topic
☐ unclear research question   ☐ not a philosophical topic
☐ too broad in scope
☐ too narrow in scope
☐ appropriate in scope

5. Nussbaum – The paper analyses the significance of Aristotle's Ergon argument in Nussbaum.

☐ clear research question   ☐ philosophical topic
☐ unclear research question   ☐ not a philosophical topic
☐ too broad in scope
☐ too narrow in scope
☐ appropriate in scope

6. Moral feelings – The paper analyses the neurological foundations of moral feelings.

☐ clear research question   ☐ philosophical topic
☐ unclear research question   ☐ not a philosophical topic
☐ too broad in scope
☐ too narrow in scope
☐ appropriate in scope

7. Kant's Categorical Imperatives – The paper analyses how the different phrasings of the Categorical Imperative interrelate.

☐ clear research question   ☐ philosophical topic
☐ unclear research question   ☐ not a philosophical topic
☐ too broad in scope
☐ too narrow in scope
☐ appropriate in scope

8. Gadamer – The paper analysis the influence of Heidegger on Gadamer.

☐ clear research question   ☐ philosophical topic
☐ unclear research question   ☐ not a philosophical topic
☐ too broad in scope
☐ too narrow in scope
☐ appropriate in scope

9. Discourse Ethics – The paper is a critical examination of discourse ethics.

☐ clear research question   ☐ philosophical topic
☐ unclear research question   ☐ not a philosophical topic
☐ too broad in scope
☐ too narrow in scope
☐ appropriate in scope

10. Feminist Ethics – The paper evaluates play behaviour in girls and boys.

☐ clear research question   ☐ philosophical topic
☐ unclear research question   ☐ not a philosophical topic
☐ too broad in scope
☐ too narrow in scope
☐ appropriate in scope

---

11. LaMettrie, „L'homme machine" – The paper shows that in his work LaMettrie did not take into account that cell walls are permeable.

☐ clear research question   ☐ philosophical topic
☐ unclear research question   ☐ not a philosophical topic
☐ too broad in scope
☐ too narrow in scope
☐ appropriate in scope

---

12. The Species Argument– The paper examines the significance of the species argument in a FAZ article by Reinhard Merkel.

☐ clear research question   ☐ philosophical topic
☐ unclear research question   ☐ not a philosophical topic
☐ too broad in scope
☐ too narrow in scope
☐ appropriate in scope

---

13. Plato – The paper addresses the role of emotions in Plato's early dialogues.

☐ clear research question   ☐ philosophical topic
☐ unclear research question   ☐ not a philosophical topic
☐ too broad in scope
☐ too narrow in scope
☐ appropriate in scope

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14. Nietzsche – The paper examines the question as to whether Nietzsche was suffering from mental illness.

☐ clear research question   ☐ philosophical topic
☐ unclear research question   ☐ not a philosophical topic
☐ too broad in scope
☐ too narrow in scope
☐ appropriate in scope

D. Literature Search

Preliminary remark: For proseminar papers, it is usually NOT necessary to carry out a systematic literature search; the emphasis is clearly on the independent engagement with a text or a systematic problem. It is helpful, however, in view of seminar papers as well as BA and MA theses to familiarise oneself with bibliographical resources.

1. Forms of publication

Journal articles
Monographs
Anthologies (= text collections, readers)
Online

2. Resources

2.1 Bibliographies
Specific bibliographies are available for the different areas of Philosophy, some in print, and increasingly electronically. The library's website of the Department of Philosophy may serve as a first point of reference (http://www.ub.unibe.ch/philolib/content/index_ger.html).

2.2 Philosopher's Index
The Philosopher's Index, established by the Philosopher's Information Centre (www.philinfo.org) is by far the most important bibliographical resource in the field of Philosophy. The index is updated quarterly, embraces the time-span between 1940 and today and publications in English, Spanish, German, French, Italian, Russian, Chinese and Japanese. 80% of the entries refer to journal articles (from 450 journals based in over 40 countries) and 20% to monographs and anthologies. The entries from journal articles frequently come with a helpful abstract.

2.3 Library catalogues
Monographs and anthologies (but no journal articles!) can be found via keyword searches in the electronic catalogues of the library network of the University of Berne, the Zentralbibliothek Bern, and the network of libraries and information centres of Switzerland (NEBIS: http://opac.nebis.ch).

2.4 Handbooks and reference works
The entries and overview essays in relevant encyclopedias and handbooks often contain valuable references. However, depending on the publication year of the respective work this information may lag behind the current state of discussion. The following works are particularly helpful:

Edwards, Paul (ed.): The encyclopedia of philosophy. New York, 1972, Macmillan.

Borchert, Donald M. (ed.): The encyclopedia of philosophy. Supplement. New York, 1996, Macmillan Reference.

Regarding currentness, the online reference works *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (http://www.rep.routledge.com/) and *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (http://plato.stanford.edu), both containing extensive bibliographies, are extremely valuable.

3. Short Manual

3.1 Consultation of handbooks and encyclopedias
Start with the references in the articles and handbook entries relevant for the topic. Of course you may also want to gain a first overview of the discussions by reading these texts.

3.2 Keyword searches
Note down several keywords that aptly capture your research question and carry out some initial keyword searches in the Philosophers's Index (English keywords) as well as in the library catalogues mentioned above (German keywords). It may be necessary to search by related or more precise keywords or to combine keywords in order to find anything at all or to limit the range of search results.

3.3 Provisional list of references
Based on your search results, compile a provisional list of references on your topic.

4. Internet

Online sources are to be used with some precaution. Besides a lot of trash, however, the internet provides many useful sources for academic Philosophy. The above-mentioned *Stanford Encyclopedia* is part of this. In addition, the internet is a suitable means for gathering information on contemporary philosophers. What is also helpful if only relevant for advanced students, is the growing number of non- published works that are made available online by their authors. For online papers see:
http://www.u.arizona.edu/~chalmers/people.html

E.   Parts of a Proseminar Paper

1. Introduction
2. <Main part>
3. <Main part>
4. <Main part>
5. Conclusion
References

The MAIN PART of a paper usually consists of a combination of the following argumentative elements. The type of research question determines which elements are required in each case:

- Definition of term(s)
- Description of the problem at hand
- Description of a specific argument / a specific position regarding this problem
- Critical discussion of this argument / this position
- Description of an alternative position
- Arguments for an alternative position
- Response to potential objections to the alternative position
- Illustration of further advantages of the alternative position
- Evaluation of the alternative position

Please note:

a) The position, which is analysed or defended in a (pro-)seminar, paper can also be a particular *interpretation* of a text.
b) Find an *appropriate subtitle* for each section; mere numberings are neither helpful nor particularly appealing.
c) Match the *number of structuring levels* with the length of the text. It is pointless to have more than two levels for a proseminar paper of 12 pages. Hence no 3.2.4.5.
d) In a (pro-)seminar paper, the individual parts are referred to as *sections*, not chapters.

F. Text Types in the Individual Sections of a Paper

1. Introduction

- Establish the derivation of the research question from topic
- Phrasing of research question and, if applicable, the hypothesis, which is to be advocated
- Reference to relevancy / significance of research question, if applicable
- Reference to literature that is referred to, if applicable
- Presentation of the structure

Text types:

- „In this context, the question arises as to ...“
- „This paper examines ...“
- „It will be demonstrated that...“
- „First of all, this requires the elucidation of A. In a second step, B is illustrated. The third part of the paper is dedicated to C and it demonstrates that D. In the conclusion, the significance of D with regards to the research question/ the question as to whether E is elaborated on.“
- My argumentation is primarily based on section X / Y's article / chapter 5 in Z.

Please avoid:

- Comments about personal motivations for the chosen topic
- Remarks about the proseminar for which the paper is written
- Mention of alternative research questions that were overruled
- General remarks about the history and significance of Philosophy / Ethics / Logic etc.

2. Main part

- Brief recapitulation of research question or hypothesis
- Work on the research question / hypothesis according to the announced structure, e. g.
  - Elucidation of the essential terms, or the argument that is referred to
  - Outline of / reference to the relevant text passages
  - Discussion or explanation of arguments, text passages, individual terms, reasons for individual steps

3. Conclusion

- Phrasing of response to the research question asked in the introduction
- Brief summary of course of argumentation / demonstration
- Outlook on outstanding questions, if applicable

Text types:

- „In this paper I examined the question as to whether A.“
- „It has been shown that B and D.“
- „In view of the fact that D the initial question as to A has to be answered as follows.“
- „It remains to be seen whether this means P.“
- „In order to work out P, the examination of Q would be required.“

Please avoid:

- Comments about personal experiences during the writing process
- Introduction of new research questions
- Statement of opinions that are not supported by the arguments discussed in the paper
- (Extensive) quotations
- General remarks about the context and the significance of the research question
- Criticism of your own research question

The following fictitious introduction to a proseminar paper on Russell's "On Our Knowledge of the External World" contains a number of serious mistakes.
Criticise the text!

Introduction

On Our Knowledge of the External World: This title informs us that Russell's concern is the „world" that we experience as „external", as „given". The fundamental question is, how do we gain knowledge about it?

My question is: What does Russell mean in this chapter by the term „external world"? What is the opposite of the „external world" and where is the border between the worlds?

I am referring mainly to the initial 38 paragraphs of chapter III. Here I divide the entire chapter into 5 large subchapters:

1-9   Introduction, research question, method

10-19   Point of departure: data

20-25   Analysis of the *External*

26-38   Our knowledge according to sensory input

39-44   Conclusion

45-64   New approach

I proceed paragraph by paragraph and ask whether, and if so, how the external world is mentioned and defined in each case.

The following fictitious introduction to a proseminar paper on the question of identity contains a number of serious mistakes. Criticise the text:

In his essay „Ontological Relativity" Willard van Orman Quine attempts to demonstrate that meaning and reference and hence ontology can exist „only in relation to a theoretical framework" (Quine (1975), S. 78).

The essay is divided into two large parts. In the first part of his essay, Quine addresses, above all, the vagueness of meaning and reference in translation. In the second part, he shows that this vagueness exists in our own language as well. In this paper, I would like to focus on the first part of the text and examine the question as to whether there really is a vagueness of meaning in translation. Quine presents us with four examples, which supposedly have a vagueness of meaning. I will use the first example in order to illustrate, in the first section of my paper, the general structure of the examples. Using his second example, I will examine in my second section whether a vagueness of meaning results from this example, as claimed by Quine. In the third section, I will address the individuation device, which could possibly resolve the vagueness in the second example. On the whole, I would like to demonstrate that Quine rightly maintains the vagueness of meaning in translation.

The relevance of the translation problem is indisputable, especially as it occupies large parts of the essay. More will be said about its status and its role right at the onset of the paper. Yet this here first: Quine would certainly not integrate translation in his argument if he weren't convinced that he could show a vagueness of meaning in it. This conviction could be referred to as a justifiable reason for the discussion of translation. I hope that my successful proof of this vagueness will be the justification of my proseminar paper.

The following conclusion of a fictitious proseminar paper titled „The End-in-Itself Formulation in Kant" contains a number of severe mistakes. Criticise the text:

Conclusion

Kant maintains that moral law is objective and applies to all people. In the second section of the *Groundworks* he states that we must never treat ourselves and others as a mere means, but always as a purpose at the same time. Although Kant lived over 200 years ago, this thought is very relevant in the present day, as everything in today's world increasingly revolves around money. Just think of organ trade or the increasing commercialisation of the world we live in!!! With his notion that people are equipped with a non-billable dignity, Kant contributes an important basis for criticism of such developments. At least I have personally profited much from my work on this important text from the history of Philosophy. One has to be clear, on the other hand, that Kant was a man of his own time, i.e. the Enlightenment, when he states that only rational beings can have dignity. We know today that animals also have dignity.

There are other issues with Kant's ethics. He claims, for instance, that all the various forms of the Categorical Imperative express the same in the end. I am not sure, however, whether this is really the case. I also think that Kant did not really provide solid reasons for our need to act morally. This is also disputed among scholars.

I have chosen the question as to what Kant actually means by stating that we must not treat others as a mere means. Do I treat someone as a mere means if, as a professional cyclist, I cycle in someone's wake? Or if I buy bread from the baker? Or if I use someone's blood donation? As mentioned above, the question cannot be asked like this. It always depends on the context.

I would like to conclude with a quotation by Oscar Wilde, who once stated quite fittingly: „Nowadays a man knows the price of everything and the value of nothing."

Mistakes:

- Commonplaces

- Inappropriate emotionality

- Irrelevant remarks about one's own reading experiences

- Unfounded claims

- New topic, new hypothesis

- Providing no answer to one's own question

- Critique of one's own research question

- Use of non-embedded quotations taken from other contexts

The following text could be a suitable conclusion to a proseminar paper titled „The End-in-Itself Formulation in Kant":

Conclusion

The so-called „End-in-Itself Formulation" is one of four formulas used by Kant to present the Categorical Imperative in his *Groundwork on the Metaphysics of Morals*. It states that we should not treat the humanity in ourselves or in any other person as a mere means but always as a purpose. In this paper I examined the question as to how this request, which is frequently referred to as „exploitation restraint", is to be understood. Clues to this can be found in the remarks on the four examples that Kant uses in order to show which concrete duties can be deduced from the formulas. First, I have commented on the importance of the fact that the formula does not prohibit the treatment of ourselves and others as a means because this would lead to completely implausible duties. Rather, it is improper to use people *solely* as a means. But when do we use someone merely as a means? With regards to the second example, Kant states that others must be able to embody the purpose of my action in themselves. This postulation is usually interpreted in terms of a principle of consent. This can be understood in the sense of an actual consent or in the sense of a rational consentability. In the application to concrete examples, both of these forms of consent result in implausible outcomes. The findings of my analysis are therefore negative: It is far from clear what it means to use someone merely as a means. Caution should therefore be used if Kant's End-in-Itself Formulation is referred to in current discussions on applied ethics.

In a second step, I addressed the question as to whether the common understanding of the End-in-Itself Formulation as instrumentalisation restraint corresponds with Kant's deliberations. The following two aspects prove this interpretation wrong: First, the term „always as a purpose at the same time" is thus rendered redundant. Second, this interpretation contradicts Kant's examples, which demonstrate that the End-in-Itself Formulation not only embraces negative duties but also positive duties, such as the act of assistance. If one wishes to fulfil the End-in-Itself Formulation, s/he cannot settle solely on not instrumentalising others but would need to contribute beneficially to the realisation of their purposes.

G. How to Improve Your Texts

Comprehensibility

Basics:

- Immaculate spelling and grammar!

- Clear and simple constructions!

- Comprehensible language, i.e.:

  No unnecessary highbrow terms!

  Only use terms that you completely understand – use reference works to clarify terms for yourself.

  „In the beginning of the third meditation, when Descartes has already recognised the incontestability of *ego cogito* and hence finds himself on axiomatic grounds...“

  What does „axiomatic" mean here? Surely nothing more than „reliable". Hence write:

  „In the beginning of the third meditation, when Descartes has already recognised the incontestability of *ego cogito* and can thus draw on this foundation of reliable insight...“

Put it in your own words:

It is important to avoid not only (quasi) plagiarism but also clumsy and hardly intelligible passages that are often due to not writing in your own words. Sounding scholarly is not the point of writing a paper.

- Try not to blend your own style of writing with the language of the author you are working on.
- No imitation of jargon!
- Do not try to sound scholarly or to express yourself distinctively. Explicitness, simplicity and precision are key!

Precision, Explicitness

Basics:

- Choose suitable words and phrasings carefully!

- „Ideas through ration can be either muddled or clear and distinct in Descartes."
  Is this a statement about Descartes' ideas? More likely: „Descartes differentiates between muddled ideas and ideas that are clear and distinct."

- Clarify the meaning of ambiguous terms.

- Many terms from Philosophy are also used in everyday language. The meaning of these terms in the context of the paper has to be clarified. Examples: category, reality, objective/subjective, logical.

- Make clear what you mean!

„These aspects are more or less what I intended to extract from the text or what resulted from a thorough examination of the issues at hand."

In plain terms, this means: „These aspects are more or less what I read into the text or what occurred to me spontaneously when thinking about these issues." In plain terms, it is also obvious that this approach is not suitable for an academic paper.

„In the process, opponent and proponent become one and the same person."

Do two people actually become one person here? Or do two people simply agree on something in a discussion?

„Carnap mentions that the question of content and form of the records (Protokollsätze) is not yet established."

What is probably meant is:

„Carnap mentions that the answer to the question of content and form of the records (Protokollsätze) is not yet established."

Clarify the role of utterances:

Basic rule: Differentiate between report and commentary! The question is hence:
Do I state what I think the author says?
Or do I state what I think *of* what the author says?

Clarify which role is played by an utterance:

- claims
- illustrates
- criticises
- acts as a value judgment
- rephrases what has already been said
- introduces a new aspect
- formulates a hypothesis
- asks a question

Clarify references of pronouns:

„The elementary sentence is the binding element between the individual words and the records (Protokollsätze), which are deducible from the elementary sentence and from which it is deducible. This is an essential point in Carnap's philosophy."

Which is the essential point? All of the above? Or just part of it?

„Carnap takes the term *state-description* as a basis for the establishment of his theory of meaning. By 'term' we mean a collocation of signs that form a unit ..."

Who is meant by "we"? The writer of the paper? The author? *Common sense?*

Reader guidance:

„As a clear distinction has to be made between knowledge and true opinion, the question arises as to what the relation between knowledge and true opinions is."

Who raises this question? The writer of the paper or Plato?

„3.2 Critique [new chapter]

Two formulas are available: a practical one and a theoretical one..."

It is left up to the reader to deduce the function of the formulas from the following remarks.

State content-related obscurities explicitly:

„As will has a wider scope than reason, extending even beyond cognition, it is indifferent in relation to cognitive capacity and deviates from the actual path."

What is meant by „will is extending" or „will deviates from the actual path"?

- Do not cover obscurities by using woolly phrases or omissions!
- If you are unsure about what to write: provide several options and explain the pros and cons of each one.

Use of terminology

Basic rule: Mark the key terms as such and define them:

„One potential source of misunderstandings lies in the use of the terms „individual", „private", „social", „public", etc. In his line of argument, Kripke uses these terms generally in their grammatical rather than their empirical meaning."

This is not helpful as long as the meaning of „grammatical" and „empirical" in this context are not further explained.

- Key terms always call for a definition, even if they appear to be self-explanatory.
- Put definitions into your own words and keep them as simple as possible.

Definitions are supposed to bring clarity:

„What is meant by the reduction of laws to the non-law-like is the notion that laws do not exist in the world but supervene to real properties."
What is urgently needed at this point is a definition of „supervene". Do not explain the obscure with obscurities!

Precise terminology:
Terms that are used in order to explain something must themselves be used in an unambiguous manner intelligible to the reader:

„What is meant by speculative truths then? Descartes presumably considers them to be logical, in the sense of claiming general validity, „objective" truths, in Kant's terms truths, which fulfil transcendental conditions, and which have nothing to do with empirical-subjective truths, which is why Descartes aims to delineate them from ethical problems such as faith and conduct."

This explanation does not help the reader in understanding the meaning of „speculative truths" but confronts him/her with a number of further questions:
„Objective" is a term used by Descartes; is it used in this sense or in a different one? What are empirical-subjective truths? What are truths that fulfil transcendental conditions?

Do not use unexplained metaphors or comparisons:

„To grasp the piece of wax in all its possible states would call for a lowest common denominator."

- Avoiding metaphors and comparisons is often the best solution!

- If you think that the metaphor cannot be explained in a non-metaphorical way: describe the problem and paraphrase the „loss"!

- If the author you are working on uses metaphors, you cannot simply adopt them but have to explain them!

Strategies for the improvement of text quality

Read the final draft critically by going through it sentence-by-sentence and asking yourself: Is this really precisely what I want to say?

A critical reading requires some distance from the text. This is difficult to accomplish with texts written by oneself. The following methods have proven helpful:

- Print the text!
- Leave the text untouched for a few days or, even better, a few weeks
- Reformat the text: apply full justification, choose a different font, e.g. no serifs and slightly enlarged!
- Read the text to yourself aloud!

- You can also read the text to someone else. Passages that provoke faltering or are not immediately comprehensible call for revision!

- Never submit a paper without a thorough counter-check!

H.   Formal Requirements for Proseminar Papers

Formal requirements

Title page including the following information:
- title of the paper
- title and semester of the proseminar
- date
- name
- student number
- address
- email

Additionally, according to requirements stated by the instructor:
- subjects (major/minor)
- previous courses taken in Philosophy
- counter-checked by

Table of contents

List of references

Reader-friendly and clear presentation of the text: sufficient margin space (top/bottom: 2cm, left/right: 2.5 cm) and line spacing (1.5), reasonable font size (11 or 12 pt, depending on font)

Immaculate language: spelling and grammar; check for typos

Length of the text (excluding title page, table of content, references): 8-10 pages

Evaluation criteria: quality aspects in a proseminar paper

Representation of the individual line of thought:

- transparent and coherent structure

- metatexts: the approach is explained

- evaluation and critique kept separate

- precise quotations and consistent representation

- reasonable use of notes (footnotes/endnotes)

- precise phrasing

- language: comprehensibility, clarity, style

Content:

- precise aim and research question
- embedding of the topic in the context of discussion (primarily systematically; give historical references if necessary)

Quality of the systematic interpretation:

- Key terms and phrases are defined.
- The line of thought is reconstructed explicitly, precisely and neatly.
- Explicit references to the text; it becomes evident what the interpretation is based on.
- A distinct awareness of the problem discussed in the relevant text is demonstrated.
- The approach, the terms used and the success of the interpretation are reflected on; these considerations are shared with the reader.
- The findings are summarised and evaluated.
- Have the self-imposed aims been reached; have the initially asked questions been answered?
- Appropriate choice of references.

Proseminar „Analytische Handlungstheorie" HS 2010
Dr. Maja Müller

How Is Weakness of Will Possible?
– Donald Davidson's Model

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I. Quotations, List of References, Footnotes, Meta-texts

1. Quotations

Where should quotations be used and where not?

If reference to other texts is made, it is important to inform the reader which texts or text passages are referred to. Providing the relevant information in the main text in the footnotes suffices for this purpose, e.g. (Scanlon 1998: 153). Word-by-word quotations are *not* necessary in this case. As a general rule, it is best to reproduce the claims and arguments of the respective authors in your own words.

Quotations are not arguments: Quoting famous philosopher X in order to support your point of view does not make an argument. However great an authority X may be, a hypothesis is not automatically proven right just because X supports it.

The temptation of sparing oneself the strenuous work of phrasing or even argumentation by employing quotations is great. However, literal reproductions of other texts cannot replace either of the two. Quotations should also not be used to lengthen texts that are too short. On the contrary, it is important to use quotations sparingly: a proseminar paper does not consist of a succession of quoted text interspersed with transitions (so-called „sandwich texts" or „text collages").

However, quotations are appropriate in two cases: First, they serve as a means of verifying that someone indeed advocates a particular view, and hence of providing a more solid base for one's own argument. Second, they are appropriate if the exact wording of a particular though is important.

It is not the reader's task to understand the quoted passage: this applies to the interpretation of the quotation as well as to the question of its relevance in the context of the argument. It is therefore necessary for the author to explain, in his/her own words, his/her understanding of the quotation and what he/she aims to demonstrate to the reader by including it in the text. If the quotation contains an argument, it is necessary to explicitly reconstruct it; if the quotation contains a key claim or supposition, it is necessary to explicitly highlight it.

How to quote

All changes applied to the original text must be indicated. Square brackets are used to signal changes in capitalisation; [...] indicates the omission of irrelevant passages. The deletion or addition of emphasis (e.g. italics) is to be mentioned in round brackets: (my emphasis) or (emphasis as in original).

Quotations in other languages must be translated. For comparison, the original text has to be included in the footnotes or, if necessary, in the main text.

The origin of the quoted passages must be precisely indicated. There are basically two options; what is important is to choose one option and to then consistently stay with it.

i)   Details on quotations *in the text*
       Author (surname only), year of publication and page numbers are given immediately after the quotation.

     Ex.:   Was es heisst, dass jemand nach einem Prinzip handelt, versteht Bittner nun so: „er erzeugt die betreffende Wirkung eben um dessentwillen, dass sie ein Fall der Regel ist. Es trifft sich nicht nur so, dass, was er tut, unter die Regel fällt, sondern weil es unter die Regel fällt, darum tut er es" (Bittner 1996: 244).

ii)   Details on quotations *in footnotes*
       Author (surname only), year of publication and page numbers are given in a footnote:

     Ex.:   Was es heisst, dass jemand nach einem Prinzip handelt, versteht Bittner nun so: „er erzeugt die betreffende Wirkung eben um dessentwillen, dass sie ein Fall der Regel ist. Es trifft sich nicht nur so, dass, was er tut, unter die Regel fällt, sondern weil es unter die Regel fällt, darum tut er es."[1]

       ————————————————————————————
       [1] Bittner (1996) 244.

The former version may result in an aesthetically unattractive text but it bears the advantage that the number of footnotes is drastically reduced. If this option is chosen, footnotes are employed only to state comments belonging to the topic but leading away from the main questions or to point to further reading (see below).

     Ex.:   Nach dem üblichen Verständnis sind intentionale Handlungen solche, die der Handelnde *aus einem Grund* tut.[1]

       ————————————————————————————
       [1] Vgl. Goldman (1970), Davidson (1980).

(There are various options for style, e.g. with or without round brackets, with colon or comma in between year and page numbers, with or without „p." in front of the page numbers, etc. Do not waste time racking your brain on this. It is best to check for different ways in other texts and to then choose the option that seems attractive.)

Further advice
- If the focus of the paper lies on one particular text, the indication of the page numbers suffices after the initial rendering of the required details. If several texts are involved, abbreviations may be used.
- Certain authors and certain works are indicated in a standardized manner; these are, among others, Plato, Aristotle, Kant (KrV), Wittgenstein. It is advisable to consult relevant secondary literature.
- Notes such as „ibid.", „loc. cit." etc. are a nuisance because they complicate the localisation of relevant passages.

- Respect intellectual property: it is imperative to provide references for literal quotations but also for all ideas adopted from other authors. Plagiarism is one of the most flagrant violations of academic standards.

2. References

There is no single correct way of listing quoted texts or works used in other ways. At a minimum, references should contain all information required for simple identification. There are various practises beyond that; a useful point of reference is the format chosen by others who have written about similar topics in a particular tradition. What is important is to settle for one option and to then consequently abide by it.

Some guidelines:

- When working with one particular text or text corpus, listing primary and secondary texts separately may prove useful.
- References are to be listed alphabetically according to the surnames of the authors or the editors. If several works by the same author / editor are used, list them according to the year of publication.
- Standard editions are frequently available for the classical authors. Use these editions as reference works. It is advisable to turn to the relevant secondary texts for orientation. This applies especially to exegetic papers.

One possible format that has proven useful is the following:

Monographs: surname, first name (year of publication): *title. subtitle*, place of publication (publisher).
Journal articles: surname, first name (year of publication): „title. subtitle", in: journal title reel number (journal number), pp. page numbers.
Book articles: surname, first name (year of publication): „title. subtitle", in: first name of editor surname of editor (ed.): *title of the book. subtitle of the book*, place of publication (publisher), pp. page numbers.

Examples:
> Aristoteles: *Nikomachische Ethik*, übers. v. Olof Gigon, neu hg. v. Rainer Nickel, Düsseldorf (Artemis und Winkler) 2001.
> Bittner, Rüdiger (1996): "Handlungen und Wirkungen", in: Gerhard Schönrich und Yasushi Kato (Hg.): *Kant in der Diskussion der Moderne*, Frankfurt /M. (Suhrkamp), pp. 240-255.
> Moore, George E. (1999 [1903]): *Principia Ethica*, ed. by Tom Baldwin, Cambridge (Cambridge UP).
> Regan, Donald H. (2002): "The Value of Rational Nature", in: *Ethics* 112 (2), pp. 267-291.
> Scanlon, Thomas (1998): *What We Owe to Each Other*, Cambridge MA (Harvard University Press).

Wimmer, Reiner (1980): *Universalisierung in der Ethik. Analyse, Kritik und Rekonstruktion ethischer Rationalitätsansprüche*, Frankfurt /M. (Suhrkamp).

One option of referring to online texts:

Dancy, Jonathan: "Moral Particularism", in: *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2001 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2001/entries/moral-particularism/>.

3. Footnotes

Contrary to widespread opinion, the number and length of footnotes do not measure the academic quality of a text. Instead, footnotes should be used rather sparingly: For what one wishes to say in footnotes is either important, and should hence go in the main text, or is unimportant and hence dispensable. Note that the main text must be sufficient in itself and hence has to be comprehensible without the reading of the footnotes.

4. Meta-texts

Meta-texts are second-level texts that guide the reader through the actual first-level text. The author uses them to inform the reader about the structure of the argumentation. Meta-texts are particularly important in junction points: Initially they inform the reader of what is to be expected in the following text. In transitions within the paper they summarise what has been accomplished so far and provide a preview of the next step. In the end they recapitulate the argumentation and its outcome.

J.   Practical Tips and Tricks for Writers of Proseminar Papers

In general...

Do not be afraid of making mistakes. Even in Philosophy one can learn a lot from mistakes.

Look for someone to discuss your paper with. Thinking does not work monologically. Talk to classmates, friends, etc. about your topic.

Let your social environment in on your project. Express your fears and difficulties to them – and also to your instructor. Talk to people who are experienced in writing papers, e.g. advanced students.

1. The hardest thing is getting started...

- Starting something new is always easier when other things are already completed. Schedule your paper in a phase that contains as few other „creative" projects as possible.

- Do not work on two papers at the same time.

- Plan ahead. Set a realistic schedule for the entire project - and then focus on only one phase at a time.

- Do not work overtime! Set a fixed amount of hours per day – and stick to this time limit, even in very productive phases.

- Do not brood excessively on the first sentence of your paper. Just start with the second one.

2. Concentration strategies

- Mark the starting point of your daily working hours by lighting a „study candle". Extinguish it every time you take a break (to eat, make a phone call, listen to music, use the bathroom, etc.) and relight it with a match when you continue. Collect the matches: These are a good indicator of your ability to focus on a given day. If you did not manage to make any progress on a „26-matches-day", then the problem is not that you are too stupid.

- Do not work longer than 90 minutes straight. After 90 minutes you should absolutely take a 20-minute break before going on – even if you are in a productive phase.

- Always postpone the re-reading of completed paragraphs to the following day. Take notes but defer thorough revisions to the concluding revision phase.

- Print the research question of your paper and hang it in a place in your room/apartment where it is clearly visible.

- Purchase a „follow-up" notebook, which you use to write down any distracting thoughts that have nothing to do with your paper but nevertheless disturb your concentration. If you keep thinking about your upcoming vacation, relationship issues, unpaid bills, friends, weekend plans or the meaning of life, it will help if you shift these thoughts from your head into the notebook and then continue your work.

3. Recognise successes

- Reward yourself for accomplishments (every completed stage of the paper is a voucher for a movie, a new plant, a long walk, a book, etc.)

- Print your detailed time schedule for the paper and hang it in a clearly visible spot in your room/apartment. Mark completed stages distinctly.

- Read each completed section aloud to yourself.

4. Structuring aids

- Note down your research question (by hand) in the middle of a DIN-A3 sheet and circle it. Around the circle, note down all terms or questions that you associate with this main question. Take twenty minutes and write a short text (by hand), which embraces all questions and terms. Read the text aloud to yourself.

- Visualise the structure of your paper in the form of a house with several rooms. The path starts out on the ground floor. This is where your main question „lives". Draw the house and assign a room to each sub-question. Note the question in the respective room. How are the rooms related? Which ones are placed on the ground floor, which ones on the first floor and which ones can only be reached by crossing the ground floor as well as the first floor? What is located in the basement (what preconditions is your paper based on – even if they are not discussed in the paper)? Which questions belong into neighbouring houses (because they are unrelated to your topic), which questions belong to entirely different parts of town?