Phil 5330 Fall 2026
Assignment 2

Mid-length essay:

Write an essay defending a philosophically interesting claim that relates to at least one topic we have discussed in class so far. The essay should be between 2000 and 2500 words. Grades will be on a letter scale, and I will write comments on your essay.

You should show that you are familiar with the required readings. Discussing material beyond that is acceptable but not required. Discussing ONLY material outside the required readings (example, an essay about the theory-laden nature of observation) is not acceptable.

The essay should be uploaded into Canvas by midnight Sunday, Oct 11th (deadline flexible with early request for extension).

I would like you to meet with me at some point before you submit your paper to talk about your initial idea. It would be best to meet after you have a thesis (or topic) in mind, have done some careful reading about it, and have something like a bullet point outline of at least a few key points you will address. And it would be best to meet at least a week before it is due.

Collaboration: Collaboration with other humans on this assignment is encouraged. Students are free to discuss the topics with one another, read each other's papers, and offer suggestions. The only restriction is that each student must do their own work and write their own paper containing their own ideas and words.

AI policy: The use of generative AI tools on this assignment is allowed, but only for very restricted purposes such as helping you to locate material that you might want to look at or for helping you to format references. Here, we will follow common professional guidelines - for example, guidelines for submitting a paper to the journal *Philosophy of Science*. Here are their author instructions:

https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/philosophy-of-science/information/author-instructions/preparing-your-materials

-- Note that you do not need to follow that journal's formatting conventions in this paper (though it is a decent idea) but you should follow the fairly minimal guidelines on AI use - namely, you cannot use AI generated text, images, etc. without attribution. Transparency is key here. If you are worried that after you are transparent, I will be upset with what you did, you should talk to me ahead of time. But for example, if you say "I only used it to generate an opening paragraph for me" then yes, I will be upset. You should not do that even for one sentence for this assignment. And obviously, you shouldn't lie about what you did do.