

**Assignment Schedule #1:**

A1) Hw: Read Russell, “The Value of Philosophy” and the “Introductions” (that is, pages 1, 38, 78, 107 and 155) in your reader. Respond to the following:

1. Russell gives one main reason why we should not study philosophy, and two why we should. Where are the outline divisions of his article where he shifts between these points? Expound these three claims. Do you think the study of philosophy can plausibly deliver the benefits Russell suggests? Hint: read his last paragraph first.

2. We will spend a great deal of time discussing the problem of evil, the cosmological argument, divine command ethics and Pascal’s Wager. Do you think these are important issues? What, if anything do you hope to gain from our discussion of them? Explain.

A2) Hw: Read Roy, “Truth as Correspondence” (available in the text or on prof Roy’s website). Respond to the following:

1. Suppose you are in a religious discussion and, whichever you disagree with, someone says, “Whatever may be true for you, it is true for me that god [does/doesn’t] exist.” Taking literally and seriously this language about truth, how is the claim problematic? How might it be reinterpreted so as to remove difficulty?

2. Suppose you are in a religious discussion and, whichever you disagree with, someone says, “Whatever your reality may be like, in my reality there [is/isn’t] a god.” Taking literally and seriously this language about reality, how do you think Roy would respond? Do you think he is right? Explain.

A3) Hw: Read Roy, “Validity and Soundness” through section 2.1 (available in the text or on prof Roy’s website). Do E2.1 at the end of the reading.

Ex: E1.1, E1.2. And, in the logic lab (UH 052), TRLL:4; these lab exercises are worth 1 Ex point for each part and count as “on time” up to the midterm exam.

A4) Hw: Read Roy, “Validity and Soundness,” through section 2.2. Do E2.2, E2.3.

Ex: In the logic lab (UH 052), TRLL:5; the lab exercises are worth 1 Ex point for each part; they count as “on time” up to the midterm exam.

A5) Hw: Finish reading Roy, “Validity and Soundness.” Do E3.1. And use our method to establish conclusions about validity for the Wager argument on p. 155 of the text.

Ex: Any of the other exercises E3.2 - 3.5.

Midterm Exam

**A0 Pascal Paper.** This assignment is to be worked alongside other homework and is due at the class period following the midterm exam. Though you should do reading and start thinking about the issues right away, details will make most sense after we have made some progress with other assignments.

Read Pascal, “The Wager.” In a paper of about three pages, adopt a stance with respect to his reasoning. That is, either attack or defend his argument. Whatever your own religious view, feel free to attack or defend. In order to give the argument its best chance, consider the argument in isolation from Pascal’s particular religious context and so *in the form presented on p. 155 of the reader*.

Do you think this reasoning is cogent? Does Pascal demonstrate the rationality of religious belief? First be sure that you understand the argument, and are able to explain it clearly in your paper. Then you will be in a position to evaluate. Your paper should have the following structure:

- I. Set up and state the argument. Then introduce the thesis you will defend.
- II. Evaluate the argument for validity (as discussed in the first part of the course) and explain your evaluation.
- III. Evaluate the argument for soundness (again, as discussed in the first part of the course) and explain your evaluation.

!This part should defend or reject a *single* objection to *one* of the premises!

- IV. Apply your conclusions about validity and soundness to the case: Is the conclusion correct? Has Pascal demonstrated the rationality of religious belief?

If you conclude that the argument is deductively valid (hint: it is), then the question of soundness depends on the truth of its premises. Thus part (III) should be the main part of your discussion. For this: (i) You may *attack* the argument by developing an attack against one of the premises. Or (ii) the way to *defend* the argument is to defend a premise against some *particular* attack: say how the attack works, and why you think it fails — it is too much to show that all the premises survive all objections!

Either way, you will want to develop some significant objection — either to defend it or to undercut it. Here are skeletal versions of objections you might consider.

The utility calculations in (2) assume a context with finite gains and losses; but this is not a situation of that sort (the comparisons break down when different religions have infinite gain, or there is infinite loss). Thus (2) is false, and the argument is unsound.

The utility calculations in (2) assume a context of repeated betting; but this is not a situation of that sort (there is no “long run” of chances). Thus (2) is false, and the argument is unsound.

It is never rational to adopt a belief on merely practical grounds apart from evidence (as to accept money to believe that you have no head). Thus (3) is false, and the argument is unsound.

It is not rational to attempt what cannot be done, and one *cannot* believe low probability propositions for practical reasons (as that you have no head). Thus (3) is false, and the argument is unsound. Hint: Pascal himself discusses this, so you should take this into account.