

Evaluation Criteria	Exceeds Expectations 100%	Meets Expectations 80%	Approaches Expectations 70%	Below Expectations 60%
<b>I. Thesis</b> The thesis of the essay is the main conclusion of your core argument. It should address the main issue of the writing scenario and be clearly presented in the introduction. (10 points)	The thesis is presented in the introduction and is a clear, unambiguous statement that responds to the appropriate issue. The main argument is introduced with the thesis. (10)	The thesis is presented in the introduction and is a clear, unambiguous statement that responds to the appropriate issue. However, <b>the argument is not sufficiently outlined in the first paragraph.</b> (8)	The <b>thesis is presented later in the essay</b> or is equivocal or ambiguous or stated indirectly. (7)	The thesis does not respond to the appropriate issue or is not presented in the introduction or is not presented at all. (6)
<b>II. Claims</b> Claims are the main premises or reasons that you offer in support of your thesis and core argument. Your claims should provide reasonable and relevant support for your thesis and core argument. (20 points)	The essay introduces a series of reasonable and relevant claims in support of the thesis. Claims employ clear and unambiguous terms that are not emotionally charged. (20)	Most of the claims are as described in the column to the left.  BUT: One or, at most, two claims are described in the column to the right. (16)	<b>Most or all of the claims are unacceptable at face value, or are not supported with cogent sub-arguments.</b> Claims employ emotionally charged language, and are only minimally relevant to the thesis. (14)	There are few if any claims offered in support of the thesis. The author simply states an opinion and often begs the question. Many claims simply reiterate general ideas. The argument is often stated by means of rhetorical questions. (12)
<b>III. Support</b> Taken collectively your claims should provide sufficient support for your thesis to persuade a reasonable and informed person that your thesis is acceptable. (20 points)	The essay offers a series of claims that provide strong support for the thesis. The arguments are well developed, internally consistent, and supported with sub-arguments. The essay anticipates possible objections. (20)	The essay provides adequate support for the thesis. Claims establish a clear chain of reasoning, but there are <b>missing links or otherwise under-developed arguments.</b> The essay doesn't anticipate possible objections. (16)	The essay has only weak support for the thesis. Arguments are poorly developed, with many missing links or logical failures. Obvious objections are ignored. Evidence is (14)	The essay offers little or no support for the thesis. There is no apparent order establishing a logical argument. Serious errors of reasoning are made. There are obvious objections and/or counter-arguments that are not addressed. (12)
<b>IV. Disciplinary Framework and Factual Basis</b> The argument should reflect a commitment to a coherent, framework, drawn from the disciplines used in religious studies.* The facts asserted are accurate and supported with authoritative§ sources. (20 points)	The author demonstrates a command of the relevant disciplinary concepts and arguments. Claims attributed to specific theories are accurately and charitably made, and correctly supported with authoritative sources. (20)	The claims may be somewhat inconsistent. The author fails to demonstrate a command of the relevant concepts of religious studies. Factual claims made are misleading or misinterpreted, or there are flaws in the documentation of those claims. (16)	The author relies on a weak or conceptually flawed disciplinary framework. The essay mostly summarizes key facts of the writing scenario and engages in little or no analysis. Factual claims made are inaccurate, not correctly documented, or <b>derived from non-authoritative sources.</b> †. (14)	There is no coherent, well established framework in the essay. Few facts are asserted, or claims attributed to religious-studies scholars or religious phenomena are obviously wrong. (12)
<b>V. Organization</b> A good philosophy essay will have an introduction that states the thesis and briefly provides an overview of the argument, a body that logically develops the key arguments, and a conclusion that ties everything together. (10 points)	The essay has a clear concise introduction that establishes the thesis and briefly reviews the core argument. The body of the essay presents a linked series of claims supporting the thesis and introduced in a reasonable manner. The conclusion ties things together and addresses any relevant remaining points. (10)	The body presents a series of linked claims supporting the thesis but the order of claims and direction of reasoning is not clear. The conclusion largely reiterates relevant points from the introduction, but does not tie major points of the argument together. (8)	The direction of reasoning in the essay is not apparent and it is not clear how the author transitions from one paragraph to another. The conclusion repeats points made in the introduction, or <b>introduces new points not made in the body.</b> (7)	The <b>essay lacks intro./body/conclusion structure</b> , or has an overly long introduction that doesn't clearly introduce the thesis and doesn't indicate the direction of argument. The body presents ideas in an unorganized fashion. (6)
<b>VI. Style</b> You should strive to present your ideas clearly and concisely, avoiding vague and ambiguous language, using well-defined terms and examples, and avoiding informal or colloquial language. (10 points)	The author demonstrates a sophisticated command of language. Ideas are presented clearly, concisely, and precisely. Avoids language that is vague, ambiguous, emotionally charged, or overly colloquial. Key terms and examples are well-defined. No irrelevant content is included. (10)	Ideas are presented clearly but could be more concise. Language is occasionally <b>vague, ambiguous, emotionally charged, or colloquial.</b> Key terms and counter-examples are left undefined. Irrelevant content is included. (8)	Ideas are not presented clearly and concisely. There is much content that can be condensed. Language is often vague, ambiguous, emotionally charged, or overly colloquial. Key terms are poorly or wrongly defined. Irrelevant content is included. <b>Word choice is often poor.</b> (7)	Ideas are presented poorly, are neither clear nor precise. There is repetition of ideas and many passages that could be condensed. Much of the language is vague and ambiguous. Much of the content is irrelevant. (6)
<b>VII. Mechanics</b> Your essay should be free of problems related to spelling, punctuation, grammar, and syntax, and should reflect an academic writing style. (10 points)	There are no errors of spelling, punctuation, or grammar. The author employs college-level sentence structure in accordance with standard English. (10)	There are minimal errors of spelling, punctuation, or grammar. The author mostly employs standard college-level sentence structure with no serious deviations from standard English. (8)	There are a few errors of spelling, punctuation, or grammar. The author employs simple sentence structure with <b>deviations from standard English.</b> (7)	There are multiple errors of spelling, punctuation, and grammar, or distracting deviations from standard English. The <b>essay doesn't employ standard form for citations or works cited.</b> (6)

\*primarily history, philosophy, literary studies, and the social sciences. §As defined by the instructor †“non-authoritative,” e.g., Wikipedia, Answers.com, “personal interest” stories in the media