

Paper 2: Leibniz and Kant

DUE DATE

This paper is due by 8:00PM on Saturday, March 7th, 2015. Please submit your paper on the Canvas website in .doc or .docx format if possible. Other acceptable formats include .pdf and .odt.

WRITING A PHILOSOPHY PAPER

All philosophers begin by expanding upon or critiquing the theories of past great thinkers. In order to respond to the work of another philosopher, one must follow three principal steps: (1) reconstruct his or her argument with charity, (2) raise objections to the argument, either about its validity or the truth of its premises, and (3) consider potential objections to one's own position. During class discussions, you undertook the first of these three steps when you reconstructed one of Leibniz's and Kant's arguments. In this paper, you will complete all three steps.

TOPIC

Please choose one of the following two topics:

- Reconstruct and criticize Leibniz's argument in his letter to Queen Sophie Charlotte that mathematical theorems are known via our "natural light", as opposed to the senses. To do so, you should discuss the relationship between mathematical theorems and necessary truths. For the purposes of this paper, you should define a necessary truth as a statement that is true in "every possible world." Respond to any obvious objections that Leibniz might raise against your critique.
- Reconstruct and criticize Kant's argument that proofs of geometrical theorems require construction in intuition. To do so, you ought to first explain why Kant believes mathematical theorems are synthetic *a priori*. Respond to any obvious objections that Kant might raise against your critique.

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

Your paper should be as long as is necessary to reconstruct the argument charitably. As a rough guideline, most students need about 1,200 to 1,500 words to accomplish this task. Your paper should not exceed 1,500 words, however. Please include a complete bibliography with any other sources that you have consulted.