

Research Project: Prospectus

PHIL 29S

due Sunday, July 30

Good research projects don't happen overnight; they require extensive research, writing, and editing. And so, midway through this course you are to write a research project prospectus: a preliminary investigation into the issue you intend to develop further in your final paper and in-class presentation. The purpose of this prospectus is: (a) to give you a head-start on your final research project, so you're not rushing to put it all together last minute; and (b) to give you some early feedback on your ideas, so that you have some guidance on how to develop them in the weeks to come.

Guidelines

Your prospectus should be **approximately 500 words in length** (i.e., 2 double-spaced pages). It should present an original discussion of a specific philosophical question raised by a specific emerging technology. This discussion will serve as the basis for your eventual final paper.

The first step in preparing for this assignment is to **settle on the specific emerging technology and philosophical question** that you will be investigating for your research project. Based on the feedback you received on your brainstorm, choose one of the technology/question pairs you presented there, amended as necessary. If you have any questions or concerns about your chosen topic, consult with me.

Begin your prospectus by **stating your topic**: the emerging technology you will be investigating and the philosophical question you will be raising about it. This should take only one sentence. Following this, **state your thesis**: a specific

answer to the philosophical question you've posed, which you wish to defend in your final research project. This should also take only one sentence. These two sentences will serve as the introductory paragraph of your prospectus.

The rest of your prospectus should then consist of your **development of your thesis**: reasons for believing your thesis, arguments in its defense, explanations and clarifications of its meaning, and so on. In developing your thesis, present each separate point you make in its own paragraph. **You should present at least two, and at most four, separate points.** Generally, making fewer but more in-depth points is better than making more but shallower ones.

And remember: this is a prospectus! You don't need to (and probably shouldn't) have every little thing worked out just yet. It is perfectly acceptable for your prospectus to end in puzzlement, or skepticism, or frustration – just be sure to explain *why* you're puzzled or skeptical or frustrated. You'll have plenty of space in your term paper to make things better!

Formatting

Prepare your prospectus for blind grading: the only piece of identifying information on your submission should be **your student number**. Please do not include your name, email, or any other identifying information.

Your prospectus may be formatted however you wish, but please remember than it is going to be read by another human (namely, your peer reviewer). A legible font, ample margins, and appropriate line spacing will all be appreciated. **Please also give your paper a title** which concisely prepares the reader for the paper to come.

Turning it in

Please submit your paper, in PDF format, via Canvas by end of day on Sunday, July 30 (or, for all your night owls, by 6 A.M. the following morning).

Grading

Your prospectus will be graded on the quality of its analysis, the cogency of its argument, and the clarity of its writing. The grading rubric I will be using will be made available on the course website.

Also be aware that after your prospectus is submitted on Canvas, it will be assigned to one of your classmates, who will use your prospectus as the subject of their peer review. (At the same time, you will receive another classmate's prospectus and do the same.) All prospectuses will be kept anonymous for the purposes of peer review, and peer reviewers will be randomly assigned.