Specific Requirements:
- Your paper should be double-spaced and between 1000 and 1400 words (not counting references, titles, your name, etc.)
- Your name should only appear on the last page of your paper.
- You will only need to submit one copy of your paper. Please bring a hard-copy to class.

You may write on any one of the three topics below. You may also come up with your own topic, but you must run the idea by me first.

Paper Assignment One:
As presented by Cleanthes in David Hume's *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, the Simple Design Argument is (roughly) the claim that the natural world is sufficiently similar to various products of human design that we can conclude that the natural world must also have had a designer. (See *Dialogues*, p. 10.) In part 5 of the *Dialogues* (pp. 24-26), Philo argues that Cleanthes's Design Argument fails. Far from proving that God exists, Philo argues that Cleanthes's argument can't even establish that there is only one designer of the world, let alone that this designer is perfect, infinite, immaterial, etc.

Write a paper in which you address the following:
1. Briefly explain why Philo thinks that Cleanthes’s argument can’t establish that there is only one designer of the world *and* why it can’t establish that there is an immaterial designer. (Note: you may assume that your reader already knows what Cleanthes’s design argument is.)
2. Briefly explain the Fine-Tuning Argument for God’s existence, as presented by Robin Collins and others.
3. Does the Fine-Tuning Argument give any reason to think that there is only one cosmic designer or that the cosmic designer(s) is immaterial? In other words, can the Fine-Tuning Argument answer Philo’s objections? Why or why not?

Some *Stanford Encyclopedia* articles that you may wish to consult (though consulting them is *not* required):
- [http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hume-religion/](http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hume-religion/) Cleanthes' presentation of the design argument and Philo's objections to it are discussed in section 4 of this article.
- [http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/teleological-arguments/](http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/teleological-arguments/) A (somewhat technical) discussion of both the traditional design argument (including Philo’s objections to it) and the Fine-Tuning argument can be found here. The relevant sections are 2.1, 2.1.1, and 4.1.
Paper Assignment Two:
In his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle claims that happiness (or *eudaimonia*) consists in “activity of the soul in accordance with virtue.” The movie *Groundhog Day* starring Bill Murray has been thought by many to ultimately endorse this Aristotelian account of the good life.

Write an essay in which you address the following:

1. Briefly explain what Aristotle means when he claims that happiness is “activity of the soul in accordance with virtue.” (Be sure to address how this claim derives from considerations of the *function* or *characteristic activity* of a human being.)
2. Citing specific examples from the movie, explain how *Groundhog Day* can be seen as endorsing this Aristotelian account of happiness. (Note: *Groundhog Day* is available via Netflix Instant Streaming, or for purchase from iTunes and Amazon Instant Video, as well as elsewhere.)
3. Do you think Aristotle’s account of happiness is correct? Why or why not?

Some *Stanford Encyclopedia* articles that you may wish to consult (though consulting them is not required):

  The most relevant sections are sections 2 and 5; but the entire article is readable and relevant.

Paper Assignment Three:
The Logical Problem of Evil is an argument for the claim that the presence of evil in the world is *incompatible* with the existence of an all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-loving God. Christian philosophers like Eleonore Stump and Alvin Plantinga believe that the existence of evil is compatible with the existence of such a God, and argue so at length. First, explain the Problem of Evil and briefly explain how either Plantinga or Stump argues that the existence of evil is compatible with the existence of a loving God.

Now consider the possibility that there exists an all-powerful, all-knowing, *wholly evil* being named Schmod. Is the presence of *good* in the world incompatible with the existence of Schmod? Why or why not?

Some articles that you may wish to consult (though consulting them is not required):

  This article (from the *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*) presents the Logical Problem of Evil and then presents Plantinga’s version of the Free-Will Defense. Section 9 very briefly touches on Stump’s response to the Problem of Evil as well.
  This article (from the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*) is, in general, both much too long and much too technical for a relative beginner. That said, sections 4 through 9 present nearly every single remotely plausible response to the Problem of Evil, and so might be worth glancing through.