

Short-Paper Guidelines for IDST-010-06

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In this article, I describe the content, style, and formatting guidelines for short papers for the Ignatius Seminar “Artificial Intelligence: From NAND to Consciousness” (IDST-010-06). A short paper states a thesis, defends it, anticipates criticisms, and cites work supporting the main argument. The theses we consider for short papers are of the type “Computers can think”, “Computers cannot have minds”, and “Jack Hoya’s argument against artificial intelligence is flawed.”

The body of the short paper is its most important element and consists of four parts: the introduction, which states the thesis, one argument supporting the thesis, one refutation of one potential criticism of the argument, and the concluding remarks. The paper also consists of a title, the author’s name, and a bibliography, and also could include equations, figures, tables, and other such elements.

The body must not exceed 650 words with the other elements not figuring into the word count. Figures, tables, algorithms, equations, and the like that are part of the body require explanation in the body. Because of the constraint on the number of words, students are free to decide the precise formatting for the short paper, such as margins, font size, line spacing, and the like. Students can use Word, Google Docs, L^AT_EX, or some other system to write their paper, but any version submitted for review or grading must be in the Portable Document Format (PDF).

Citation serves three purposes. First and foremost, citation helps a scholar build a structure of knowledge and evidence that supports the argument, thereby strengthening it. Second, citation makes clear the scholar’s contribution; this is not only important for peer review, but also, in the classroom, it is important for assessment and grading. Finally, citation gives credit to our predecessors. These three purposes are encapsulated perfectly in the notion that if scholars see far, it is because they stand on the shoulders of giants, a statement correctly attributed to Sir Issac Newton, but one that goes back to the twelfth century to Bernard of Chartres (John of Salisbury, Bishop of Chartres, 1955, p. 167).

The sources and their quality for the short paper are critically important. Sources should come from the primary literature. Unauthoritative sources and secondary or tertiary sources should be avoided. For example, a short paper citing articles from Wikipedia is not acceptable. Students may start their search for sources with Google Scholar and Wikipedia, but that search must end with peer-reviewed articles from authoritative sources.

Students can use any recognized citation and bibliography style. I tend to use author-date citations for books (e.g., Priest, 2001), articles (e.g., Bayes, 1763; Turing, 1950), and articles in collections (e.g., Connor, 1990; Dreyfus and Dreyfus, 1990).

Students must cite any and all sources that contribute to the main ideas presented in their short paper. This includes all published course materials, such as books and articles. Students do not have to cite my lectures, class discussions, or conversations with me.

Students can verbally discuss their ideas and arguments with classmates and other people outside of the class, but students must acknowledge any exchange that contributes to the ideas

presented in their paper. Citations for personal communication appear in-line and do not include an entry in the bibliography (Jane Hoya, personal communication, 28 July 2014). Students may not share anything in written form without my direction and permission.

I will grade writing assignments along three dimensions: how well students understand the issue at hand, how well they argue and support their thesis, and how well they write and organize the paper. I give the argument the most weight and writing and organization the least.

If students need help writing their short or papers, I am more than happy to help during class or during office hours. The Georgetown Writing Center (<http://writingcenter.georgetown.edu/>) is a valuable resource. I can also recommend Jim Pryor's advice on writing philosophy papers (Pryor, 2012) as well as Harvard Writing Center's publications on writing philosophy papers (Harvard College Writing Center, 2008; Chudnoff, 2007).

If students are wondering why short papers are so short, I made them short for three reasons. First, I want students to focus on thinking and discussing, not on filling pages with words. Second, writing about complex things in a short format is not easy, and I want students to practice writing precise, compact papers. Third, I want to use peer review for feedback prior to the submission of the final version for grading, and long papers could make peer review difficult and burdensome.

References

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