

Final Paper Topic Suggestions
Topics in Analytic Philosophy
18 November 2006

Here are some suggestions of topics for your final paper. I would, however, encourage you to think of your own topic. I am happy to confer with you about your topic, and to talk with you about your work in progress. The regular due date for this paper is 8 December.

1. The nihilist about heaps says that the sorites reasoning shows that there are no heaps. Some philosophers object to nihilism about heaps on the grounds that there is a reverse argument which concludes that everything is a heap. Explain and evaluate this objection to nihilism about heaps. (You may find section 4 of Peter Unger's "There are no ordinary things" helpful.)
2. Explain and evaluate Williamson's argument for bivalence in Chapter 7.2 of *Vagueness*.
3. Small differences don't matter in the application of vague terms. Taking away one grain of sand does not turn a heap into non-heap. This is the property of *tolerance* discussed in class. Can the degree theory explain why vague terms are tolerant?
4. In "Proof of an external world", Moore claims that he does not need to prove his premises in order to prove that there are external things. Why does he think so? Is he right about this? Why or why not?
5. Explain what Wright means when he says in "(Anti-)Sceptics Simple and Subtle" that Moore's proof is a case of transmission failure. Why does Wright think that Moore's argument is an example of transmission failure? Is Wright right about this? Why or why not?
6. Why does Stroud say that "The consequences of accepting Descartes's conclusion as it is meant to be understood are truly disastrous. There is no easy way of accommodating oneself to its profound negative implications." (p 38). Is Stroud correct? Why or why not?
7. According to Stroud, "if somebody knows something, p, he must know the falsity of all those things incompatible with his knowing that p (or perhaps all those things he knows to be incompatible with his knowing that p.)" (29-30) Explain what Stroud means. An example will help. What is Stroud's argument for this claim? What do you think? Should we accept this claim or not?