

Huron University College

Department of Philosophy

Introduction to Philosophy

Philosophy 020E – Section 550

Essay Topic – Second Term

Dr. Steve D'Arcy

Second Term Essay Assignment:

Write a 2,000 word essay on the following topic:

Explain clearly Searle's theory of "institutional" reality. Consider any one of the following phenomena: 'race'; gender; childhood; knowledge; expertise; or 'mental illness.' Offer a reasoned assessment of how plausible it would be to use Searle's theory as an account of the "ontology" of that phenomenon.

The paper should defend an explicit *thesis* – to be stated clearly near the beginning of the paper – concerning the defensibility or indefensibility of an "institutional" account of the phenomenon you choose to discuss. A typical thesis might be: "For these reasons [just mentioned], I believe that knowledge is best understood as what Searle calls a 'status function,' which depends on collective acceptance. In that sense, knowledge is itself an institution." Another example: "For these three reasons, I believe that gender should be viewed primarily as a biological phenomenon, rather than an institutional one."

The paper is due at the beginning of class, February 15, 2005.

Other essay topics *may* be acceptable, with *approval* of the instructor. All students are encouraged (but not required) to drop by during office hours to discuss their paper, before or during the writing process, for advice, assistance or feedback on ideas.

The web site <http://geocities.com/s_j_darcy> will direct you to resources (click "Resources") which offer guidance about how to write a philosophy essay, and how to document sources (if any) in accordance with the MLA citation style, which is the citation format required for this assignment.

Late submissions are penalized at a rate of 2% per weekday. Submissions more than 2 weeks late will not receive a grade, unless accompanied by medical documentation clearly explaining the necessity of a late submission. Late submissions in any given term will be graded after the examinations for that term. Students not wishing to be penalized for lateness are urged to begin work well before the deadline.

Plagiarism is a serious academic offence and will be treated as such. Students who are in doubt as to the nature of this offence should consult their instructor, Department Chair or the Dean, as well as the Huron University College Statement on Plagiarism, available at the reference desk in the HUC Library and at <http://www.huronuc.on.ca/plagiarism.pdf> . In addition, students may seek guidance on avoiding plagiarism from a variety of current style manuals available at the Reference Desk in the Library. Information on these resources can be found at: www.huronuc.on.ca/library&computing/styleguides.htm

Plagiarism detection software may be used in this course. Students may be required to submit their written work in electronic form.
