



**SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY**

*The State University for Education, Training and Research in Blended Format, Kerala*

University Building, Kureepuzha, Kollam, Kerala-691601 | [www.sgou.ac.in](http://www.sgou.ac.in)

## **ASSIGNMENT QUESTIONS**

### **MA PHILOSOPHY WESTERN PHILOSOPHY- I SEMESTER- I (M23PH01DC)**

#### **SET 1 (Descriptive)**

Choose one topic from the following five assignment options. The maximum score for this assignment is 15 marks.

1. Elaborate Plato's theory of forms/ideas along with his allegory of cave. What does it represent?
2. Describe Aristotle's theory of substance. He upholds the inseparability of form and matter against Plato's two world-theory. How does he do that?

**Hints:** Concrete universal, Potentiality and actuality

3. Explain the shift from natural philosophy in the ancient Greek to theological philosophy in the medieval period and elaborate the major debates in the medieval philosophy.

**Hints:** reason versus revelation, natural theology and divine theology, Aquinas, Augustine

4. Berkeley argues that physical objects like chairs, trees and human beings exist only as they are perceived. It means that they exist only in the mind and are nothing but a bundle of ideas. Do you agree with his philosophy? Elaborate

5. Critically evaluate Hume's problem of induction and denial of causality

Hints: Problem of generalization from past and present instances to the future, No necessity that effect should follow the cause, habitual association

## **SET II (Analytical)**

Choose one topic from the following five assignment options. The maximum score for this assignment is 15 marks.

1. Knowledge is nothing other than perception” Theaetetus responds to Socrates’s question “What is Knowledge” in the dialogue. In his attempt to refute this definition, Socrates equates it with the famous Sophist Protagoras’s thesis that “man is the measure of all things” (homomensura). The Sophists hold that perception gives us the knowledge. Plato challenges it and argues that true knowledge can only be attained through rational inquiry, that is, contemplation and comprehension of the forms. Elaborate the dialogue till the point “knowledge is justified true belief” and critically evaluate two sides in the debate

2. Critically analyze the major issues in the medieval philosophy/period and the differing views on them.

**Hints:** God as omnipotent and omniscient, creation of the universe from nothing, Pre-determination and the problem of human agency, freedom and responsibility, theory of sin and the problem of evil.

3. The ‘modern’ turn in philosophy is mostly about a methodical approach to philosophy which includes application of mathematical and logical axioms and principles to philosophical enquiries. Elaborate and analyze the modern turn in philosophy and the major philosophical figures.

**Hints:** Descartes, method of doubt, from self-evident principles through deducting reason to theorems, Spinoza, Leibniz, philosophy as a scientific endeavour

4. It seems to us that a new born baby does not use ‘mind’ or ‘reason’ much. In many cases, it gets knowledge from sensory organs, not from reason. For example, a baby sees a burning fire and does not apply its mind/reason on the fire. In other words, the reason does not give it any knowledge about the fire. Now, it moves towards the fire and touches it. There it gets the knowledge that fire is something which burns us if we come into contact. Compare and contrast the empiricist position that we get knowledge from sensory organs with the rationalist position that we get knowledge from reason. Do a critical evaluation of both positions from real-life scenarios.

**Hints:** Plato, Descartes, John Locke, mind as a blank slate, empty canvas, sensory organs as the primary source of knowledge, reason as the primary source of knowledge

5. Hume's radical empiricism has severe implications on his metaphysics, ethics and epistemology. Elaborate

**Hints:** Impressions and ideas, Problem of induction, Denial of the Self, "Reason is the slave of passions."

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**MA PHILOSOPHY**  
**SEMESTER-I**  
**INDIAN PHILOSOPHY- I**  
**M23PH02DC**

**SET 1 (Descriptive)**

Answer **any one** assignment in a minimum of 5 to 7 pages. Each assignment carries 15 marks.

1. Explore the Doctrine of Dependent Origination in Buddhism. Discuss how the twelve links in the chain of dependent origination explain the cycle of suffering (saṃsāra) and the interconnectedness of all phenomena.

**Hints:** Explain the concept of Dependent Origination, discuss the relationships among the twelve links and the interconnectedness of all phenomena, the cycle of suffering and achieving liberation in Buddhism

2. Explore the concept of Ātman in the Upaniṣads. Discuss the various interpretations of Ātman, examining its nature, role, and significance in the pursuit of self-realization.

**Hints:** Concept of Ātman as presented in the Upaniṣads, the nature of Ātman and its relation with the ultimate reality, the significance of Ātman in the context of individual identity, Ātman in the pursuit of self-realization.

3. Discuss the concept of Brahman as presented in the Upaniṣads. Explore the attributes, nature, and implications of Brahman.

**Hints:** Upaniṣadic portrayal of Brahman, the nature of Brahman, different perspectives within the Upaniṣads regarding the immanence and transcendence of Brahman,

4. Examine the ethical teachings of the Bhagavad Gītā. Discusses the ethical principles presented in the Gītā and how these principles guide moral decision-making.

**Hints:** Ethical dilemmas within the Bhagavad Gītā, dharma, righteousness, and duty shape the moral framework in Gītā, the concept of selfless action

5. Trace the etymology and historical development of the term ‘Upaniṣads.’ Investigate how these texts emerged, evolved, and became an integral part of Indian philosophical thought.

**Hints:** The etymology of the term Upaniṣads, the historical development Upaniṣads, influence of the Upaniṣads on different philosophical schools,

## **SET II (Analytical)**

Answer **any one** assignment .No page limit. Each assignment carries 15 marks.

1. Analyse the foundational principles of materialism in Cārvāka philosophy, emphasizing how their reliance on perception challenges traditional epistemological frameworks. Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of this perception-centric approach and its implications for understanding the nature of knowledge.

**Hints:** Principles of materialism, Cārvāka’s view on perception, analyse the strengths and weaknesses of Cārvāka’s perception-centric approach, challenges on traditional epistemology.

2. Examine the relationship between Brahman and Ātman in the Upaniṣads. Analyse the interconnection, interdependence, or identity of these two fundamental concepts in Indian thought.

**Hints:** Relationship between Brahman and Ātman in the Upaniṣads, the concept of identity between Brahman and Ātman, analyse differing interpretations within the Upaniṣads regarding the relation of Brahman and Ātman

3. Examine the doctrine of Anekāntavāda in Jaina metaphysics. Discuss how the principle of non-absolutism influences the Jaina understanding of reality and the nature of truth. Explore the practical implications of Anekāntavāda in navigating diverse perspectives and resolving philosophical paradoxes within Jaina thought.

**Hints:** Fundamental principles of Anekāntavāda, the role of non-absolutism in shaping Jaina perspectives on reality, the practical implications of Anekāntavāda, reconciling seemingly contradictory viewpoints.

4. Give an analysis of the major schools of Buddhist philosophy. Explore the distinctive features, key philosophical tenets, and doctrinal differences among these schools.

**Hints:** Major Buddhist philosophical schools, key philosophical tenets of each school, the doctrinal differences among Buddhist schools

5. Elucidates the core metaphysical principles found in Vedic texts. Analyse how these metaphysical concepts shape the Vedic worldview and contribute to the understanding of the ultimate nature of reality.

**Hints:** The core metaphysical principles within Vedic texts, the interconnectedness of the material and spiritual realms, Vedic perspectives on the ultimate nature of reality

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**MA PHILOSOPHY**  
**SEMESTER-I**  
**TRADITIONAL LOGIC**  
**M23PH03DC**

**SET 1 (Descriptive)**

Answer **any one** assignment in a minimum of 5 to 7 pages. Each assignment carries 15 marks.

1. In light of the statement that 'Logic possesses both normative and descriptive aspects,' describe logic, its nature, and scope. Consider its dual role in providing normative guidance and descriptive analysis.

**Hints:** Explain logic and its nature - Distinguish between descriptive (things they are) and normative science (things ought to be) – Establish how logic possesses both normative and descriptive aspects.

2. Define the denotation and connotation of terms and examine the relationship between them. Explain how these meanings may differ across various cultures.

**Hints:** Define denotation (Denotation indicates the quantity) – explain connotation (Connotation refers to the quality) – explain the inverse relationship between connotation and denotation – write down how the relationship between denotation and connotation is influenced by context and culture.

3. Describe the distribution of terms in categorical propositions, emphasizing their reference to members of a class.

**Hints:** Describe the distribution of terms (distribution refers to the referring class) – explain how the subject term and predicate term are distributed in categorical propositions (A, E, I, O).

4. Discuss how the figure of a syllogism is determined by the position of the middle term in a categorical syllogism. Explain the rules for the four possible combinations of the figure of syllogism.

**Hints:** Explain what determines the figure of a syllogism – Give the four possible combinations of the middle term – Write the rules or special canons for each figure.

5. Discuss scientific induction, elaborating on its stages and the systematic process involved in drawing conclusions from empirical evidence.

**Hints:** Define scientific induction, which establishes general laws – Make a detailed description of the stages involved in it (Observation of facts, Formulation of hypothesis, Verification of hypothesis, and proof) – Give a detailed exploration of these stages.

### **SET II (Analytical)**

Answer **any one** assignment. No page limit. Each assignment carries 15 marks.

1. Analyze the statement 'Propositions take the form of statements, but not all statements are propositions.' Make a clear distinction between propositions and statements. Additionally, elaborate classifications of propositions, such as categorical, hypothetical, and disjunctive, with special reference to the classifications of categorical propositions based on quantity and quality.

**Hints:** Write a description of different types of sentences – explain how declarative sentences alone fall under the category of proposition – give a comparative note between sentences and propositions – distinguish the different classifications of propositions – explain how the categorical propositions are classified into A, E, I, O types.

2. Investigate the concept of immediate inference of eduction, emphasizing the ability to derive multiple propositions from a single one. Provide different types of eduction with illustrations.

**Hints:** explain immediate inference (draw conclusion from a single given premise) – make a detailed note on the immediate inference of eduction (may differ in the subject, predicate, or both) – detail the different classifications of



education such as conversion, obversion, contraposition, and inversion – provide an appropriate illustration for each type.

3. Analyze Aristotle's assertion that syllogism is a mediate inference, emphasizing the necessity for adherence to specific rules governing a valid syllogism, and examine the statement with the help of these rules.

**Hints:** Discuss mediate inference (draw the conclusion from two or more premises) – explain syllogism (it has two and only two premises) – give a note on the structure of a syllogism – detail the need for a syllogism to adhere to specific rules – give an elaborated analysis of the rules of syllogism.

4. Examine the role of immediate inference of opposition as a tool for understanding the relationships among propositions, utilizing the traditional square of opposition.

**Hints:** discuss immediate inference of opposition (differ in quantity, quality, or both) – examine how immediate inference of opposition helps to understand the relationship among propositions – draw the square of opposition – make a comparative description of the relations of contrary, sub- contrary, sub-altern, contradictory.

5. Examine the nature of disjunctive syllogism, and provide a comprehensive discussion on its valid and invalid forms with illustrative examples.

**Hints:** detail disjunctive syllogism with illustrations –discuss the valid forms of disjunctive syllogism with examples – compare and contrast it with the invalid forms.

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## **MA PHILOSOPHY SEMESTER- I ETHICS (M23PH04DC)**

### **SET 1 (Descriptive)**

Choose one topic from the following five assignment options. The maximum score for this assignment is 15 marks.

1. What is ethics? Explain Scope and meaning of ethics

**Hints:** human customs or habits, good and bad, ethics- psychology, sociology, divisions of ethics- normative meta-ethics and applied ethics.

2. Explain Greek Hedonism: Epicurean and Stoic

**Hints:** pleasure, maximize happiness and reduce the pain, Pursuit of Intellectual Pleasure, Virtue and Inner Peace

3. Discuss meta-ethical theory.

**Hints:** Cognitivism and non-cognitivism, moral realism and moral anti realism

4. Explain Modern hedonism.

**Hints:** Sidgwick and Peter Singer's Utilitarianism

5. Explain moral naturalism. Explore Naturalistic view of morality

**Hints:** Moral Realism, Metaphysical Naturalism, Epistemic Naturalism,

moral naturalism,

### **SET II (Analytical)**

Choose one topic from the following five assignment options. The maximum score for this assignment is 15 marks.

1. "Flourishing, thriving, happiness, or well-being are all parts of eudaimonia." In today's world, material success and fortune are valued more highly than the pursuit of pleasure. How could Aristotle's concept of eudaimonia (happiness) be helpful? analyse

**Hint:** Aristotle's concepts of Eudaimonia and virtue, Humans seek eudaimonia, standards of Aristotle's ethics, intrinsic virtue

2. What was the shift between mediaeval and modern ethics? In the mediaeval period, society was dominated by the concept of God. Is there any similarity between mediaeval times and the present situation? Analyse your view.

**Hint:** Historical difference between Greek thinkers, concept of God, theory of happiness. Transition of the Middle Ages, dominated by the church, development of ethics, ethical theories

3. "Deon" means duty. What do you understand about Kant's duty? How do you fulfil your duty to society? Analyse

**Hint:** rational morality, categorical imperative, Kant's ethics, Autonomy, Dignity Hypothetical and categorical imperative

4. Compare the difference between moral intuition and universal prescriptivism. Moral intuitionism is moral intuitionism based on its epistemology and ontology. Analyze the terms such as good, bad and ought on the basis of epistemology

**Hint:** Richard Price moral propositions are self-evident, the meaning of language and its use. intuitionist thought, empirical investigation about the world, common feeling of good, bad

5. How do you understand rational intuitionism? Sidgwick speaks of three ethical theories: intuitionism, egoistic ethical hedonism, and utilitarianism. How these concepts help with the benevolence of others

**Hint:** pleasure theory, benevolence, pleasure is the ultimate aim of life, axiom of rational benevolence, individuals should treat others

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**MA PHILOSOPHY  
SEMESTER- I  
AESTHETICS AND ART APPRECIATION  
(M23PH01AC)**

**SET 1 (Descriptive)**

Choose one topic from the following five assignment options. The maximum score for this assignment is 15 marks

1. Elaborate the notion of absolute beauty according to Plato?
2. Define Cathartic experience with two suitable examples.
3. What is Immanentism according to Croce?
4. Why does Croce argue that the realm of aesthetic is the fundamental?
5. Describe the sense in which Croce argues that Art is not ideal.

**SET II (Analytical)**

Choose one topic from the following five assignment options. The maximum score for this assignment is 15 marks.

1. There is a disparity between art and logic which Croce points out. What is that disparity?  
What is its basis?

**Hints:** Try to answer the questions by considering two contrasting cases each from the realm of art and from the realm of reason, for example, a case of logical argumentation. Identify the disparity which was sought to be picked out in the question through such a process of comparison and contrast.

2. Art is twice removed from reality is a Platonic view. How do you demonstrate such view by following Plato? Can you offer a counter argument to the Platonic view?

**Hints:** Consider a movie or a play as per your choice as an example and compare it with the reality that it purports to depict and demonstrate the point that you wish to argue for. Try to construct a counter argument from the same example(s).

3. How does Plato establish that beauty is one? Argumentatively check whether the Platonic claim overcomes the difficulty that the puzzle of beauty raises.

**Hints:** Answer this question in the light of the Platonic theory of Ideas by describing how the idea of beauty figures in the Platonic metaphysical scheme. Check whether the conception creates a sort of tension with the problem of beauty. Present the points with the help of concrete examples.

4. Croce argues that art has its own logic and thus it is different from Logic per se. Explicate the character of the logic of art.

**Hints:** Try to arrive at a concrete description about what Croce meant by what he identifies as the 'logic of art'. Pitch it against a useful description about what is Logic. Use them to pick out the characteristic features of the logic of art, so that you will be able to show whether such logic displays a definite structure or not. State whether the logic of art is monolithic or multifarious in the abovementioned backdrop.

5. Can Cathartic experiences be part of real life experiences outside the realm of art? If so why, if not why not?

**Hints:** Consider typical cases of Cathartic experiences in the realm of arts that the audience commonly experience say a Shakespearian play, which falls under the genre of tragedy and compare them with some of the real life experiences of tragic episodes. Try to analyse whether there are any common feature which they share or not. Build your argument within such an illustrative framework.

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