**Assessment Rubric**

Please use the following rubric to assign a point value (10 points possible) to each of your short-answer paragraphs. Each paragraph should include a clear and precise thesis (1–2 sentences) that directly addresses the prompt, 1–2 direct quotes from the primary materials of the course, and at least 5 additional sentences that analyze the direct quotes and explain how the evidence supports your thesis.

Here is how each short-answer question should be graded:

**3 points**: You must have a thesis—one or two sentences—that directly answers the posed short-answer question. It is often helpful to underline your thesis. Therefore, to self-grade your short-answer question, please identify and reread your thesis. This is important because the thesis gives direction and shape to your response. If you have no point to prove, you really have not responded deeply to the interpretive question. Consider how well your thesis fully answers the question posed in a philosophical way.

- **3 points = You have a powerful and well-focused thesis:**
  - The reader definitely knows your intent by reading the thesis.
  - You announce the subject you are exploring in your thesis and your thesis is explicit and specific.
  - You clearly identify the philosophical argument you are going to make.

- **2 points = You have a focused and generally effective thesis:**
  - The reader has a good idea of your intent by reading the thesis.
  - You generally announce the subject you are exploring in your thesis.
  - You generally identify the philosophical argument you are going to make.

- **1 point = Your thesis could be made stronger, more definite, and more focused:**
  - The reader does not have an exact idea of your intent by reading your thesis.
  - Your thesis should announce more specifically the subject you are exploring.
  - You need to more clearly identify the philosophical argument you are going to make.

- **0 points = You have problems with the clarity and focus of your thesis. You are unable to identify a thesis in your interpretive response.**
7 points: After you have an underlined thesis that directly answers the question, you must cite at least one direct quote from the course materials that prove your thesis. You should spend at least 5 sentences analyzing your evidence and explaining how the evidence you have chosen proves your point (your thesis).

7 points = You have effective evidence to prove your thesis (your philosophical argument), and it is in the form of a direct quote. The subsequent sentences analyze your quotation from the course materials in an effective manner:

- You chose a powerful direct quotation from the course materials, and it directly helps to prove your thesis (your philosophical argument).
- You worked on anticipating counterarguments to your philosophical stance. This anticipation of counterarguments powerfully addresses serious, as opposed to peripheral, possible objections to your argument.
- Your analysis of the evidence you choose to support your thesis is original, concise, and clever.
- You illustrated a clear familiarity with the course materials and that you have thought about these materials in a meaningful way.

6 points = You have general evidence to prove your thesis (your philosophical argument), and it is in the form of a direct quote. The subsequent sentences analyze your quotation from the course materials in a general manner:

- You chose a good direct quotation from the course materials, and it generally helps to prove your thesis (your philosophical argument).
- You worked on anticipating counterarguments to your philosophical stance. This anticipation of counterarguments mostly addresses serious, as opposed to peripheral, possible objections to your argument.
- Your analysis of the evidence you choose to support your thesis is somewhat original, usually concise, and somewhat clever.
- You illustrated a general familiarity with the course materials, and you have thought about these materials in a somewhat meaningful way.

5 points = You have adequate evidence to prove your thesis (your philosophical argument), and it is in the form of a direct quote. The subsequent sentences analyze your quotation from the course materials in a satisfactory manner:
• You chose a *satisfactory* direct quotation from the course materials and it *somewhat* helps to prove your thesis (your philosophical argument).

• You worked on anticipating counterarguments to your philosophical stance. This anticipation of counterarguments *somewhat* addresses serious, as opposed to peripheral, possible objections to your argument.

• Your analysis of the evidence you choose to support your thesis is *somewhat average, lacks a certain conciseness, and is too general.*

• You illustrated *some familiarity* with the course materials, and you have thought about these materials in a *very general* way.

4 points = You *lack* evidence to prove your thesis (your philosophical argument), and it is in the form of a direct quote. The subsequent sentences *do not adequately* analyze your quotation from the course materials:

• You *failed to choose a direct quotation* from the course materials, and it *fails to* help prove your thesis (your philosophical argument).

• You *failed to work on anticipating counterarguments* to your philosophical stance. This anticipation of counterarguments *does not address* serious possible objections to your argument.

• Your analysis of the evidence you choose to support your thesis is *unoriginal, lacks conciseness, and is vastly general.*

• You illustrated *little or no familiarity* with the course materials, and you have thought about these materials in a *basic* way.

3 points = You *do not have any* evidence to prove your thesis (your philosophical argument), and your paragraph *does not contain* direct quotes. The subsequent sentences *do not* analyze your quotation from the course materials:

• You *failed to include any direct quotations* from the course materials.

• You *did not attempt to* anticipate counterarguments to your philosophical statement.

• Your paragraph *does not contain any* analysis of the evidence you forward to prove your thesis.

• You illustrated *no familiarity* with the course materials.
Sample Short Answer: Grading Using the Rubric

**Sample Question:** Friedrich Nietzsche propounds a “philosophy of the future” that is “beyond good and evil.” What does Nietzsche mean by this future philosophy that is “beyond good and evil”?

**Example of an Exemplary 10-Point Short-Answer Essay**

In *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, Friedrich Nietzsche expounds what amounts to a philosophical cataclysm. He attacks the fundamental presupposition of religious and, specifically, Christian doctrine in philosophy, and as a result, he aims to debunk the concept of a biblical apocalypse.

- You have a powerful and well-focused thesis.
- The reader definitely knows your intent by reading the thesis.
- You announce the subject you are exploring in your thesis, and your thesis is explicit and specific.
- You clearly identify the philosophical argument you are going to make.

Instead of proceeding cautiously, Nietzsche offers a full-frontal assault on the Judeo-Christian tradition. Nietzsche’s writing is meant to be an intellectual cataclysmic; he hopes for nothing short of a radical shift in modern philosophy. One of his key targets is “the great ladder of religious cruelty,” which, he argues, provides the false hope of an ultimate moment of truth, justice, judgment, and reward or punishment at the expense of truth and the impulse to live fully.

According to Nietzsche, among the many historical sacrifices that religious belief necessitates are the atavistic sacrifice of loved ones (especially first-born children) and the requirements of solitude, fasting, and sexual abstinence—all ascetic life-denying instincts. The last sacrifice—the “ultimate act of cruelty”—is the absolute denial of life in hopes of a beneficent judgment at the time of apocalypse: “Did not one finally have to sacrifice everything comforting, holy, healing, all hope, all faith in (the name of) a concealed harmony, in a future bliss and justice?”

- You illustrate a clear familiarity with the course materials, and you have thought about these materials in a meaningful way.

- You choose a powerful direct quotation from the course materials, and it directly helps to prove your thesis (your philosophical argument).

In the process of denying the possibility of biblical apocalypse and the end of days in which each person will be judged according to Judeo-Christian moral principles,
Nietzsche calls for a future philosophy beyond good and evil. One of his primary goals is to produce a rupture within Judeo-Christianity itself and to reduce the moral structure the religious tradition offers to a mere heap of contradictions, false hopes, and ridiculous abnegation. But how does he come to such radical conclusions? To begin with, Nietzsche questions the very foundations of Christian causality as he longs to free philosophy from the necessity implied by a biblical apocalypse.

Although some may argue that Nietzsche has little concern for debunking the notion of apocalypse in his writing, in actuality, his future philosophy that is beyond good and evil is centrally concerned with such biblical end of days: “It is we alone who have fabricated causes, succession, reciprocity, relativity, compulsion, number, law, freedom, motive, purpose,” he argues, “and when we falsely introduce this world of symbols into things … as though this symbol-world were an ‘in itself,’ we once more behave as we have always behaved, namely mythologically.”

• You work on anticipating counterarguments to your philosophical stance. This anticipation of counterarguments powerfully addresses serious—as opposed to peripheral—possible objections to your argument.

For this reason, Nietzsche considers himself a herald of future, nonreligious-based philosophy, and he writes that his task at hand is then “wakefulness itself.” In his future philosophy, which effects a cataclysmic break with Christian ideology and disregards the possibility of an end of days that privileges the weak, Nietzsche argues that different principles—based on the morality of the strong, the proud, and the domineering—will take over. That is to say, Nietzsche considers it not evil at all to be a master—a strong and domineering individual.

When the biblical apocalypse is forgotten and when his future philosophy is embraced, Nietzsche proclaims a true cataclysm: “Now the world is laughing, the dread curtain is rent, the wedding day has come for light and darkness.”

• Your analysis of the evidence that you chose to support your thesis statement is original, concise, and clever.

Comments: This sample essay would receive all 10 points. Three points would be given for a powerful, explicit, and well-focused thesis that clearly makes a philosophical argument. This essay would also receive seven points for effectively proving the thesis with direct quotes from the course material, for anticipating counterarguments, and for analyzing evidence in an original, concise, and clever way. Finally, it shows a clear familiarity with the materials and displays meaningful thought about these materials.
Example of a Poorly Crafted 3-Point Short-Answer Essay

Friedrich Nietzsche is a modern philosopher who obviously has clear issues with religion. Nietzsche’s name is synonymous with a disregard for the ideas of Christianity. He identifies all that has to do with religion as weakness and all that has to do with existentialism as strength. In his own life, Nietzsche suffered from mental illness and ultimately had a mental breakdown; there is a debate as to whether this mental illness is due to a poorly treated case of syphilis or some other disease. It is obvious that his illness deeply influenced his lack of belief in a benevolent creator. His future philosophy is simply an early manifestation of German militarism and Nazism.

It is obvious that the future of philosophy for Nietzsche is one of military might and overcoming the weak. His philosophy is beyond good and evil because he does not concern himself with ideas of either good or evil. Nietzsche was a professor at the University of Basel at a young age, but it seems he only had great disdain for the Western intellectual tradition. Although it was Nietzsche who always stated that God was dead, it is more than a bit ironic that the only death we can prove is the passing of Nietzsche and all his disease-inspired ideas that do not care to recognize the obvious presence of good and evil in the past, present, and future.

Nietzsche did not get along with other philosophers of the age, such as Arthur Schopenhauer, and he fought with the famous composer Richard Wagner. It seemed he was, by nature, a confrontational person.

Comments: This sample essay would only receive three points. There is no clear and focused thesis; in fact, no thesis can be identified. There are no direct quotations from the course materials, so the essay does not show any familiarity with them. Because there are no direct quotations, there is no analysis of evidence. Finally, because no real thesis is philosophically pursued, the essay response also fails to anticipate any counterarguments. By more clearly identifying a central argument and by analyzing direct quotations from the course materials, this answer would be greatly improved.