Kinds of Examination Questions

Each examination should take one hour. Students will be expected to write about six to eight blue-book pages. Questions will be of the following types:

1. Definitions (1/2 to 1 page)—Ideally, definitions should state a genus & a specific difference. For example (with the genus underlined and the species double-underlined, “Darwinism is a biological theory which states that species originated by descent with modification from one or a few first species” or “Open-mindedness is the disposition to consider new ideas.” Definitions should, when possible, also include an illustration. Points of contrast may also be helpful in defining a term, as might a discussion of the importance of the term to moral philosophy. A one-line answer will generally be insufficient.

2. Distinctions (1-2 pages)—Define (as above) the terms being distinguished in a way that shows their similarities and difference. Then say why the distinction is important.

3. Arguments (1-2 pages)—State the argument in a way that makes the the premises and the conclusion clear. Then say informally why the author thinks the premises are true. (This might include definitions of key terms or cases from which the premises are induced.)

4. Statement of Theories (1-2 pages)—Say what problem the theory is trying to resolve (or what question it is trying to answer). Add definitions, examples, contrasts, &c., as necessary to clarify the theory.

5. Essays (4 pages)—Essays should combine definitions, distinctions, and arguments into a coherent and well-organized exposition.