Philosophy

1. The Correspondence vs the Pragmatic theories of truth. Is the pragmatic theory of truth an accurate way to define what is true and what is false? Explain the correspondence theory of truth. Under this theory, what does it mean for an idea to be true? Why do Peirce and James think that this is a problematic idea? How does Peirce explain what an idea is, if it is not a “copy” of a sense impression like Hume claimed? How are ideas always connected with practical purposes? How do we really get our ideas? How is the method of science superior to the other three methods of “fixing belief”? How does James propose to redefine truth in practical terms? Do you think James and Peirce’s redefinition of truth is useful, or does it miss something?2. Feminist Epistemology. Do you think Grosz and Narayan are correct when they problematize the notion of "objective" knowledge? How do Grosz and Narayan each argue that traditional epistemology has overlooked important aspects of knowledge? Whaat is the problem with claiming to have "objective" knowledge? How does Grosz explain her view of “perspectivism?” Why isn’t it the same thing as complete relativism where there is no such thing as truth? What does Grosz think is the purpose of feminist philosophy and epistemology? According to Narayan, what kinds of knowledge do oppressed people have that others do not? How is this both an advantage and a disadvantage? Do these philosophers make sense? If they do, give reasons and examples to support those ideas.3. Mind and Body. Do you think the mind and the physical brain are two separate things, or really just one thing? How does Descartes explain the difference between mind and body? What qualities does mind have that body does not, and vice versa? What is the difference between physical and mental states? What is the mind-body problem? What examples do critics offer to show that mind and body are not really two different things? How does J. C. C. Smart argue that the mind and brain are the same thing? Which side do you think makes more sense, and why?4. Free will and Determinism. Do you think we have free will, or are all our decisions determined by outside forces? What is scientific determinism? Why do so many materialists like Laplace and D’Holbach think that laws govern our decisions? What would this mean about the future, and what implications does it have on the idea of personal responsibility? Pick either James or Sartre, and explain why that philosopher thinks that determinism is problematic? What does the philosopher you chose think free will is, and why does he think we should believe in it? What are the problems that ensue if we do not believe in free will? Which side of this argument makes more sense to you?5. Cultural relativism. How do Benedict and other relativists argue that morality depends on culture? Give some examples of how cultures view morality differently. According to cultural relativists, what does it mean to be moral or immoral? How do other philosophers criticize cultural relativism? What are some of the potential problems with cultural relativism? What do you think? Is morality relative to culture, or are there universal principles of morality?6. Egoism. According to psychological egoists, what is the motivation for human action? Explain the story of Gyges Ring, and how it is supposed to prove that all people are selfish. According to Glaucon and other egoists, why do people agree to follow laws? How might a psychological egoist explain actions that seem altruistic (selfless), like when people donate money to charity or help others? On the other hand, what are some of the main criticisms of psychological egoism? What do you think – are all people really selfish?