

Phil 420: *Metaphysics*
Fall 2006

Class meeting time: T 7:00-9:45 pm
Class location: UH 336
Telephone: 278-7560
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Instructor: Dr. JeeLoo Liu
Office: H 311-A
Office hours: T 3:00-5:00 pm
R 2:15-3:15 pm
or by appointment

Texts:

Metaphysics: The Big & Hard Questions. [Course packet prepared by JeeLoo Liu]
Available at Copyco [Located on the South East corner of Chapman Ave. and State
College blvd. (714) 680-9800]

Course Description:

This course is designed to be an introduction to *contemporary* metaphysics. The issues in metaphysics, such as what kinds of things exist and how they exist, began with ancient Greek philosophers. In this course we will take a look at how contemporary analytic philosophers deal with these same old issues. This semester we will focus on two key issues that are the current focus of contemporary metaphysics: the existence of properties and the nature of causation. The course will be conducted in lecture/discussion format.

- Course Objectives:**
1. Students will demonstrate general understanding of several key issues in contemporary metaphysics.
 2. Students will master the skills to write a philosophy paper that includes critical reasoning, sustained argumentation, and insight. Students will also learn the basics of doing research in philosophy.
 3. Students will demonstrate the ability to organize and present course materials in class. This training can enhance their ability to teach or communicate ideas in public.
 4. Students will improve their philosophy literacy and be able to read difficult analytic philosophical articles on their own.

Grading:

Mid-term exam	20 %
Final exam	20 %
8 weekly summary essays (3 pages)	20 %
1 final paper (8-10 pages)	20 %
Presentation	10 %
Active class participation	10 %
Full attendance	2 points extra credit
Extra essay	1 point extra credit

To receive a final grade for the course, no portion of your grade can be a “zero”.

COURSE GRADES: Calculated on the following scale

95-100	A
90-94	A-
87-89	B+
84-86	B
80-83	B-
77-79	C+
74-76	C
70-73	C-
67-69	D+
64-66	D
60-63	D-
Under 60	F

Academic Dishonesty:

“Academic dishonesty is comprised of obtaining or attempting to obtain credit for work by the use of any dishonest, deceptive, fraudulent, or unauthorized means.” The most commonly observed form of academic dishonesty is copying others’ writings on the Internet. Even when you are merely borrowing a single sentence from someone else, doing so without proper quotation marks and author-attribution counts as plagiarism. **Students who commit acts of academic dishonesty will automatically fail the course.** Students with questions about how to cite others’ work should see the instructor.

Class Attendance and Participation:

Students must be conscientious about attending classes on a regular basis. Any consecutive absences must be given proper explanation. **Since we only meet once a week, you are allowed only one absence without explanation.** To excuse your absences from that point on, you will need to present credible documentation (busy at work or being caught in traffic, etc., will not constitute an admissible excuse). **Given proper reason, you can be excused without penalty. Starting with the second absence, every unexcused absence will constitute a half-grade reduction in your final grade (3 points off in the final average).** Class participation includes active discussion in class, raising relevant questions, answering questions, and paying close attention in class. **Everyone (each student as well as the**

instructor) is responsible for making this class interesting, engaging, and thought-provoking.

Classroom Etiquettes:

Classroom environment is for the instructor and all students to interact with one another in a professional and intellectual manner. Students are expected to observe common classroom etiquettes. Behavior that interferes with classroom activities is considered disruptive behavior. Such behavior includes (but not restricted to)

- (i) constant late arrivals;
- (ii) early departures without proper explanation;
- (iii) chatting with your neighbors during lectures;
- (iv) eating in class;
- (v) doing things unrelated to the course in class, such as reading other books, doing assignments for other courses, or playing with your laptop.
- (vi) not turning off your cell phone in class.**

Students with repeated disruptive behavior will be asked to leave the classroom.

General Policies:

1. To succeed in this course, you should keep pace with the syllabus. Your regular attendance is strongly emphasized, and you are also expected to finish the reading assignments prior to each class. Make sure you allot plenty of time to the preparation for the course.
2. All written assignments must be typed, double-spaced, and free of spelling errors.
3. Weekly summary essays must be handed in **on the assigned date and in person (no email attachment unless you can send it *before* class). No essays *after* my lecture on the given article will be accepted.** The main purpose of these homework assignments is not for me to evaluate you, but for me to assist you. From your essays, I can understand where the difficulties lie and attempt to help you gain more understanding. Homework will be graded as a set. On the final day of the semester, hand in the whole set of homework in a folder. The grade of your homework will be based on your overall effort as well as performance.
4. There will be **eleven** homework essays assigned this semester, and you are required to hand in at least **eight** of them. **Essay 1 is mandatory.** Each summary must discuss all articles assigned for the class. If your summary is incomplete or incredibly scanty in content, it will face rejection and you will need to revise it and resubmit it (within the following week) for credit. If you end up writing less than ten credited essays, you will receive 10-points

reduction for each missed essay in the homework portion (20% of the total grade). **Each additional essay will receive one point extra credit in the final grade.**

5. Preparation for the final paper is done in stages. I will suggest possible paper topics and I would like to meet with you individually to discuss your paper topic. You need to submit a **polished** draft on November 14 (failure to do so will face an automatic **F** for the paper). After getting back my feedback, you will need to revise your paper accordingly (failure to revise your paper substantially will guarantee a below-*C* grade for the paper). The final paper is due on the last day of class. You need to hand in **two** copies of your final paper. You will also give a short presentation of your paper topic on that day.
5. Student presentation of course materials will begin midway through the semester. Each presentation takes about 30 minutes. Two students form a team to present the course material assigned for that day. Presenters should prepare an outline of the presented material as handouts (and you are welcome to go over your handout with me in advance). This is a chance for students to develop their ability to organize and present course materials.
6. Exams will be given in the form of essay questions (study questions will be prepared for each exam). **No make-up exam will be given unless you obtain permission from me at least two days in advance or if you present your special reason with acceptable documentation.**
7. **To receive a final grade for the course, students must complete all assignments.** In other words, if you get a “zero” for any of the assignments (paper, exams, homework essays, participation and presentations), you will automatically fail the course.

Class Schedule

<u>Date</u>	<u>Content of discussion</u>	<u>Assignments for this class</u>
[Introduction]		
Week 1		
T 8/22	(1) Keith Campbell: <i>Metaphysics</i> , chs. 1, 2 (2) E. J. Lowe: <i>Metaphysics as the Science of Essence</i>	[None]
Week 2		
T 8/29	(1) D. M. Armstrong: <i>What Is A Law of Nature</i> Essay 1	chap. 6

I. [Universals, Properties and Kinds]

- Week 3**
T 9/5 (1) Bertrand Russell: The World of Universals *Properties*, 45-50
(2) F. P. Ramsey: Universals *Properties*, 57-73
Essay 2
- Week 4**
T 9/12 (1) David Armstrong: Universals as Attributes *Universals*, ch. 5
(2) Chris Daly: Tropes (Sections 1-2) *Properties*, 140-143
Essay 3
- Week 5**
T 9/19 (1) David Armstrong: Properties I (pp. 19-46) *A World of States of Affairs*
(2) David Armstrong: Properties II (pp. 47-55) Chapters 3 & 4
Essay 4
- Week 6**
T 9/26 (1) D. H. Mellor: Properties and Predicates *Properties*, 255-267
Essay 5
- Week 7**
T 10/3 (1) E. J. Lowe: Ontological Categories and *The Four-Category*
Categorical Schemes *Ontology*, 1 & 2
(2) E. J. Lowe: Properties, Modes, Universals chap. 6
Essay 6
- Week 8**
T 10/10 **Review**
Mid-term Exam **Bring a large bluebook to class.**

II. [Causation]

- Week 9**
T 10/17 (1) Causation: Introduction Sosa & Tooley, *Causation*
(2) David Lewis: Causation *Journal of Philosophy* 70: 556-67
(3) Jaegwon Kim: Causes and Counterfactuals *JP* 70: 570-72
Essay 7
- Week 10**
T 10/24 (1) David Lewis: Counterfactual Dependence *Nous* 13: 445-476
and Time's Arrow
(2) David Lewis: Causation as Influence *Causation & Counterfactuals [C&C]*
Essay 8 75-106
- Week 11**
T 10/31 (1) Jonathan Schaffer: Trumping Preemption [*C&C*], 59-73
(2) John Collins: Preemptive Prevention [*C&C*], 107-117
Essay 9
- Week 12**
T 11/7 (1) David Lewis: Void and Object [*C&C*], 277-290
(2) Helen Beebe: Causing and Nothingness [*C&C*], 291-308
Essay 10
- Week 13**
(1) D. H. Mellor: For Facts as Causes [*C&C*], 309-323

T 11/14 and Effects
Mandatory: Final Paper due (Polished draft only)

Week 14

T 11/21 **Thanksgiving Vacation**

Week 15

T 11/28 (1) S. Shoemaker: Causality and Properties *Identity, Cause, and Mind*, 206-233
(2) S. Shoemaker: Causal and Metaphysical *Identity, Cause, and Mind*, 407-426
Necessity
Essay 11

Week 16

T 12/5

[Paper Topics Presentation]

Review

Final Paper due

**[Hand in the whole set of
homework in a folder]**

[hand in two copies of your paper]

FINAL EXAM: Tuesday December 12 7:30-9:20 PM