

Phil 420: *Metaphysics*
Spring 2008

Class meeting time: TR 2:30-3:45 pm
Classroom: EC 032
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Instructor: Dr. JeeLoo Liu
Office location: H-311A
Office hours: T R 3:45 - 5:15 pm
or by appointment



Text:

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 analytic* 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.

- (1) Realism vs. Anti-realism: What is “reality”? Do we really know the reality? Is reality simply what we perceive, or is it what we as humans have created together? Is human science *advancing toward* reality, or are we simply shifting from one scientific paradigm to another? Is what we call ‘reality’ constructed out of humans’ conceptual schemes?
- (2) The Philosophical Analysis of the Concept of *Causation*: What is causation? Is causation deterministic or probabilistic? Is causation singular or lawful? Should ‘causation’ be defined *counterfactually*?
- (3) The Puzzle of *Time*: Is time real or unreal? What constitutes “the *present*”? Is time travel possible?
- (4) Four-Dimensionalism and Persistence through Time: Can there be identity over time? Do we have “temporal parts” or do we persist through time as a single entity? Four-Dimensionalism is the view that persistence through time is like extension through space. A road has spatial parts in the subregions of the region of space it occupies; likewise, an object that exists in time has temporal parts in the various subregions of the total region of time it occupies. Three-Dimensionalism, on the other hand, is the doctrine that things “endure”, or are “wholly present.” We will examine this debate.

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 [non-cumulative]	20 %
8 weekly summary essays (2-3 pages)	20 % [out of 11]
1 final paper (8-10 pages)	20 %
Presentation of course material	10 %
Active class participation	10 %
Full attendance	2 points 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:

97-100	A+	74-76	C
94-96	A	70-73	C-
90-93	A-	67-69	D+
87-89	B+	64-66	D
84-86	B	60-63	D-
80-83	B-	Under 60	F
77-79	C+		

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 and the misconduct will be reported to the Dean of Students Office.** 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. **You are allowed up to three absences without explanation. After the second absence, every absence will constitute a half-grade reduction in your final grade.** To excuse your absences from that point on, you will need to present credible documentation (busy at work is not an admissible excuse). 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. If you can't make it to class on any given day, you should send me an e-mail explaining the reason in order to receive excused absences. Attendance is highly emphasized in this class. Do not squander your free absences – there are always unexpected things that would prevent you from coming to class on a given day. If you use up your free absences, you will have to take the penalty when you do miss one more class.
2. All students with a full attendance (not even excused absences) record will receive two extra credits in their final grades.
3. All written assignments must be typed, double-spaced, and free of spelling errors. Unacceptable essays will be returned to be retyped.
4. Homework must be handed in **on the assigned date and in person (essays left in my mailbox will be counted as 'late')**. Each homework essay should comprise both an explanation and an evaluation of the author's view. **Do the best you can even when you find the article too difficult to summarize.** 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.
5. In this class students will be divided into two groups for homework assignments. If you belong to Group A, you should hand in your essays on *every* Tuesday; if you belong to

- Group B, you should hand in your essays on *every* Thursday. However, if in any given week you know that your schedule conflicts with your group's due date, you can write an essay for the other group. **No essays *after* my lecture on the given article will be accepted (not even submitted electronically).** You need to be organized and self-disciplined to turn in one essay per week.
6. You are allowed to skip three weekly essays (complete 8 essays out of 11 assignments) without penalty. However, **the first three assignments will be mandatory**, so that you can establish a good habit from the outset.
 7. Homework essays will not be graded individually. They are to be collected at the end of the semester for a total assignment of homework grades. Your grade will depend on the total effort you have put into these essays. I hope you will appreciate the importance of finishing an assigned project on time.
 8. In the second half of the semester, students will team up (two in each group) to give presentation on course materials. The presentation takes about 30 minutes. Presenters should prepare an outline of the presented material as handouts. This is a chance for students to develop their ability to organize and present course materials. **Do not hand in your homework essay on the date of your course material presentation. So, plan ahead.**
 9. You are to write one term paper on a topic of your choice (my approval required). To prepare for your final paper, you need to do a polished draft first (**due on April 8**). I will give you feedback for further improvement on your paper. The revised paper is due on the last day of class. **A half-grade deduction will be made for each day delayed (for both deadlines).** I will schedule a paper conference with you to discuss your term paper project.
 10. 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.**
 11. **Students are expected to arrive on time for exams. Late arrivals will not be given time extension.**
 12. **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.
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Syllabus

<u>Date</u>	<u>Content of discussion</u>	<u>Assignments for this class</u>
T 1/22	Introduction	None
[Realism vs. Anti-Realism]		
R 1/24	Michael Devitt: What Is Realism?	[packet] #1
T 1/29	John Searle: Does the Real World Exist?	[packet] #2 HW #1 [A]
R 1/31	Hilary Putnam: Why There Isn't a Ready-made World	[packet] #3 HW #1 [B]
T 2/5	Ernest Sosa: Putnam's Pragmatic Realism	[Packet] #4 HW #2 [A]
R 2/7	Michael Devitt, A Naturalistic Defense of Realism	[Packet] #5 HW #2 [B]
T 2/12	Hilary Putnam: <i>The Many Faces of Realism</i> Lectures I & II	[Packet] #6 HW #3 [A]
R 2/14	Hilary Putnam: <i>The Many Faces of Realism</i> Lectures III & IV	[Packet] #6 HW #3 [B]
T 2/19	Nelson Goodman: <i>Ways of Worldmaking</i> (I) Goodman: 1-56	[Packet] #7 HW #4 [A]
R 2/21	Nelson Goodman: <i>Ways of Worldmaking</i> (II) Goodman: 91-140	[Packet] #7 HW #4 [B]
T 2/26	Michael Dummett: Realism & Anti-Realism	[packet] #8 HW #5 [A]
[The Concept of Causation]		
R 2/28	J. L. Mackie: Causes and Conditions	[packet] #9 HW #5 [B]

T 3/4	(i) David Lewis: Causation (ii) Jaegwon Kim: Causes and Counterfactuals	[Packet] #10 HW #6 [A]
R 3/6	G. E. M. Anscombe: Causality and Determination	[Packet] #11 HW #6 [B]
T 3/11	Wesley Salmon: Probabilistic Causation	[Packet] #12 HW #7 [A]
R 3/13	D. H. Mellor: On Raising the Chances of Effects	[Packet] #13 HW #7 [B]
T 3/18	Review	
R 3/20	APA Pacific Meeting [No Class]	
T 3/25	Mid-term Exam	
R 3/27	Philosophy Symposium [Attendance required]	
T 4/1	Spring Recess	
R 4/3	Spring Recess	

[The Puzzle of *Time*]

T 4/8	J. M. E. McTaggart: (The Unreality of) Time [Term paper due in class]	[Packet] #14 HW #8 [A]
R 4/10	C. D. Broad: McTaggart's Arguments against the Reality of Time	[Packet] #15 HW #8 [B]
T 4/15	(i) A. N. Prior: The Notion of the Present (ii) Dean Zimmerman: The Privileged Present: Defending An "A-Theory" of Time	[Packet] #16 HW #9 [A]
R 4/17	J. J. C. Smart: The Tenseless Theory of Time	[Packet] #17 HW #9 [B]
T 4/22	David Lewis: The Paradoxes of Time Travel	[Packet] #18 HW #10 [A]

[Identity Over Time and Four-Dimensionalism]

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| R 4/24 | John Hawthorne, Three-Dimensionalism vs. Four-Dimensionalism | [Packet] #19
HW #10 [B] |
| T 4/29 | Michael J. Loux, Endurantism and Perdurantism | [Packet] #20
HW #11 [A] |
| R 5/1 | Mark Heller: Temporal Parts of Four-Dimensional Objects | [Packet] #21
HW #11 [B] |
| T 5/6 | Michael Rea: Four-Dimensionalism. | [Packet] #22 |
| R 5/8 | Last class: Review and Reflections
<u>Final revised paper due in class</u> | |

Final Exam: Thursday , May 15 2:30 - 4:20 PM

