

Metaphysics

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course we will examine some of the major problems in (and about) metaphysics:

- (1) What is metaphysics?
- (2) The nature of time
- (3) The possibility of time travel
- (4) Personal identity
- (5) Fatalism
- (6) Free will and determinism
- (7) Possibility and necessity

We will start with discussing generally what metaphysics is, and hope to acquire a better understanding of the nature of metaphysics in this course by thinking about some particular metaphysical issues. There will be a lot of in-class discussions and a fair number of short writing assignments to encourage students to think about the issues.

TEXTS

Twenty six articles by different authors. Reading material will be posted on Blackboard Learn.

GRADING

Your course grade is based on the score you get out of a total of 200 points:

(i) 30 points for attendance: you may miss 3 classes with no penalty; after that, you lose 1 point for each class you miss unless you have very good reason for missing that class.

(ii) 40 points for 2 article-summaries [20 points each].

(iii) 80 points for 8 in-class quizzes [10 points each]. A quiz consists only of multiple-choice questions on an article or book chapter assigned for reading.

(iv) 50 points for a final paper of about 1,500 words.

** This class has no final exam.*

Grade conversion:

181-200 points : A	171-180 points : A-	161-170 points : B+
151-160 points : B	141-150 points : B-	131-140 points : C+
121-130 points : C	111-120 points : C-	101-110 points : D
100 and below : F		

(Please note that this course is designed in such a way that if you attend most of the lectures, do most of the reading, take most of the in-class quizzes, and turn in all the writing assignments, it is not difficult at all to get a B for the course.)

LECTURE SCHEDULE

- 1st week **What Is Metaphysics?**
 Robin Le Poidevin, "What Is Metaphysics?"
 A.J. Ayer, "The Elimination of Metaphysics"
 Avrum Stroll, "Metaphysics Revivified"
- 2nd week **The Nature of Time:**
 D. H. Mellor, "Past, Present and Future"
 J. Ellis McTaggart, "The Unreality of Time"
- 3rd week **The Nature of Time:**
 J. Ellis McTaggart, "The Unreality of Time" (continued)
 E. J. Lowe, "The Indexical Fallacy in McTaggart's Proof of the Unreality of Time"
- 4th week **The Possibility of Time Travel:**
 Paul Horwich, "On Some Alleged Paradoxes of Time Travel"
 David Lewis, "The Paradoxes of Time Travel"
- 5th week **The Possibility of Time Travel:**
 David Lewis, "The Paradoxes of Time Travel" (continued)
 Kristie Miller, "Is Some Backwards Time Travel Inexplicable?"
- 6th week **Personal Identity:**
 John Locke, "Of Identity and Diversity"
 Bernard Williams, "The Self and the Future"
- 7th week **Personal Identity:**
 Bernard Williams, "The Self and the Future" (continued)
 Derek Parfit, "Personal Identity"
- 8th week **Personal Identity:**
 Derek Parfit, "Personal Identity" (continued)
 John Perry, "The Importance of Being Identical"

- 9th week **Fatalism:**
Richard Taylor, "Fatalism"
Richard Taylor, "Fate"
Trenton Merricks, "Truth and Freedom"
- 10th week **Fatalism:**
Trenton Merricks, "Truth and Freedom" (continued)
John Martin Fischer & Patrick Todd, "The Truth about Freedom: A Reply to Merricks"
- 11th week **Free Will and Determinism:**
Peter van Inwagen, "The Incompatibility of Free Will and Determinism"
Harry Frankfurt, "Alternative Possibilities and Moral Responsibility"
- 12th week **Free Will and Determinism:**
Harry Frankfurt, "Alternative Possibilities and Moral Responsibility" (continued)
Harry Frankfurt, "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person"
- 13th week **Free Will and Determinism:**
Galen Strawson, "The Impossibility of Moral Responsibility"
- 14th week **Possibility and Necessity:**
Michael J. Loux, "The Necessary and the Possible"
- 15th week **Possibility and Necessity:**
David Lewis, "Possible Worlds"
Robert Stalnaker, "Possible Worlds"