

Phil 131 Topics in Metaphysics
Prof. Eric Watkins
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Class: RWAC 0426 T/Th 9:30-10:50
Office hours: Th 8:30-9:30 by appt.
Office: RWAC 0486

Phil 131 Topics in Metaphysics

This upper-division philosophy course will consider a number of central topics in contemporary (analytic) metaphysics. Specifically, it will consider what metaphysics is in general, and whether metaphysics is best thought of in modal terms or in terms of grounding relations. It will also consider two specific metaphysical issues in some detail, one concerning the nature of composition, the other concerning personal identity.

Reading/Class Schedule (subject to adjustment)

Week 1

Tues 4-1 L1 - Introduction
Th 4-3 L2 - Logic for Metaphysics (Part 1) [Ney, *Metaphysics*, Ch. 0] Lecture Quiz #1

Week 2

Th 4-10 L3 - Logic for Metaphysics (Part 2) [Ney, *Metaphysics*, Ch. 0]
L4 - Quine, "On What There Is" [Ney, *Metaphysics*, Ch. 1] Lecture Quiz #2

Week 3

Tues 4-15 L5 - Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity*, Ch. 1 [Ney, *Metaphysics*, Ch. 7]
L6 - Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity*, Ch. 2 Lecture Quiz #3

Week 4

Th 4-24 L7 - Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity*, Ch. 4
L8 - Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity*, Ch. 5 Lecture Quiz #4

Sun 4-27 11:59pm **First Paper Due**

Week 5

Th 5-1 L9 - Plato, *The Euthyphro*
L10 - Schaffer, "On What Grounds What" Lecture Quiz #5

Week 6

Th 5-8 L11 - Audi, "Towards a Theory of Grounding"
L12 - Ney, *Metaphysics*, Ch. 3 (p. 89-103) Lecture Quiz #6

Sun 5-11 11:59pm **Second Paper Due**

Week 7

Th 5-15 L13 - van Inwagen, *Material Beings*, Ch. 1, 2, 3, 6, 8 Lecture Quiz #7

Week 8

Th 5-22 L14 - van Inwagen, *Material Beings*, Ch. 9, 10
L15 - Perry, *A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality*, Night 1 Lecture Quiz #8

Week 9

Th 5-29 L16 - Perry, *A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality*, Night 2
L17 - Perry, *A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality*, Night 3 Lecture Quiz #9

Week 10

Th 6-5 L18 - Nagel, "Death"
Concluding Lecture Lecture Quiz #10

Sun 6-8 11:59pm **Third Paper Due**

Every class has at least one, and typically two, pre-recorded lectures that have been uploaded onto the Canvas course page. Each lecture is indicated by L and then the lecture number. You are expected to listen to the lecture before class.

Reading enclosed in brackets [] is recommended (but not required).

II. Requirements

1. Ten lecture quizzes - There will be a quiz on Canvas every week. It must be completed before class (i.e., before 9:30) on the day that it is due. Their main purpose is to ensure that you are doing the reading and listening to the lectures such that you have understood the main points before we come together to discuss the issues. I will drop your two lowest quizzes. (20% of final grade)
2. Three (4-5 page) papers – There will be four paper topics, one for each of the main topics in the course. The first two papers are required. You can then choose between the third and fourth paper topics. (If you like, you can write both and take the higher grade.) These papers will combine exposition and evaluation. (75% of final grade) (Late papers will be penalized one grade per day, unless you request and are granted an extension *before* the due date.)
3. Active Class Participation – All of our in-person class time will be devoted to discussion. I will not lecture. If you participate (e.g., say something in class) regularly, you will get full credit (as long as what you say can be construed as in some way constructive). Merely being present does not count toward class participation. If you are shy and do not feel comfortable speaking up in class, I welcome email questions about the prior to the class in which it will be discussed. (5% of the final grade)

III. Required Texts

1. All required texts are available in Canvas (under “Files”).

IV. Other Information

1. You are expected to observe the UCSD Academic Integrity Policy in this course. *Plagiarism is attributing work to yourself that you did not do.* To maintain integrity in the course, cases of plagiarism that affect the fair assessment of student academic performance based upon the course learning objectives, course policies, or assignment instructions will be referred to the Academic Integrity Office for assessment and potential disciplinary action. The course learning objectives include developing skills in reading and writing as modes of critical thinking. Accordingly, examples of activity that constitute plagiarism in this course include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Using generative artificial intelligence (e.g. large-language models like ChatGPT) to generate or modify the structure, ideas, or language of your work.
- Using secondary sources to generate or modify the structure, ideas, or language of your essay. In the Humanities Program, you are to write essays based only on your own study of the assigned materials, not on secondary sources.
- Submitting the same essay for more than one assignment or class.
- Allowing another individual to assume one’s identity for the purpose of enhancing one’s grade.

Students agree that by taking this course all required work will be subject to text-similarity review through Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism.

2. If accommodations are needed for a disability or for religious reasons, please notify me as soon as possible. (For accommodations, you must register with the Office for Student Disabilities.)
3. If, for whatever reason, you are experiencing unusual difficulty completing this class, please let me know.