

PHIL 4302: Metaphysics (CRN 19081)

Professor Marc A. Moffett

Email: mamoffett@utep.edu

DESCRIPTION

Aristotle calls metaphysics the study of being *qua* being. In more contemporary terms, it is the study of existence (being). In particular, there are two major questions about existence which will concern us:

1. At the most general level, what kinds of things exist? Is existence the same for things of all kinds, or do things exist in different ways?
2. What are the relationships between things of different kinds? That is, how are the different parts of reality woven together?

Getting clear answers to these questions is surprisingly difficult. Indeed, I will go so far as to say that no matter how you end up answering the questions we raise in this class, the picture of the world you implicitly hold will be very, very strange.

COURSE OBJECTIVES, MATERIALS, & EVALUATION

Objectives: My primary objective is just to mess with your mind a bit! You might think I'm kidding, but I assure you I am not. There is significant intellectual value in having very deep seated assumptions about the world challenged. By the time this course is over, I hope you are left with a feeling that much of what you assumed (implicitly or explicitly) was obvious is, at best, highly contentious. There are easy answers to the questions we will pose. Despite this, I hope you come to appreciate that we can address these questions in a systematic and logical manner, even if we can't fully settle the debates.

Materials Required:

- Online course packet of required and optional readings.

Evaluation:

Midterm and Final Exam (100 points each)

One Research Essay (100 points): Undergraduates: At least 5 pages. (Double spaced, 1" margins, 10-12 point font. Do not exceed 10 pages).

- Note: All essays should have 10-12 point font and 1" margins. You will need cite your sources. Please use APA style.

Discussion Board Participation (210 points total): One post consisting of at least five full sentences. Two responses to fellow students consisting of at least two full sentences. 30 points overall per discussion board participation.

- NOTE: Discussion board content must be substantive and address the material being covered in the module. Merely quoting or summarizing course content will not get you full points. Similarly, comments that merely agree with another person's post will not be counted. I particularly encourage thoughtful argumentation, analysis and critical discussion. Please see the Netiquette section below for appropriate discussion board behavior. I will, at my discretion, give **extra credit** points for particularly good posts and/or comments.
- Discussion board comments and responses for each module must be completed by the date given in the course calendar at 11:59 pm.

Total Possible Points for Course: 510

Grading scale

A	B	C	D	F
≥89.5%	≥79.5%	≥69.5%	≥59.5%	<59.5% (percentages)
≥900	899-700	799-700	699-600	≤599 (points)

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND NETTIQUETTE

Academic Integrity: Integrity is a concern for everyone. By joining the UTEP community every student agrees to abide by the scholastic dishonesty policy ([available here](#)). Any student who commits an act of scholastic dishonesty is subject to discipline. Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, and the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable to another person.

Cheating:

- Copying from the test paper of another student
- Communicating with another student during a test
- Giving or seeking aid from another student during a test
- Possession and/or use of unauthorized materials during tests (i.e. Crib notes, class notes, books, etc)
- Substituting for another person to take a test
- Falsifying research data, reports, academic work offered for credit

Plagiarism

- Using someone's work in your assignments without the proper citations
- Submitting the same paper or assignment from a different course, without direct permission of instructors

Collusion

- Unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing academic assignments

Netiquette

- Always consider audience.
- Remember that members of the class and the instructor will be reading any postings.
- Respect and courtesy must be provided to classmates and to instructor at all times.
- No harassment or inappropriate postings will be tolerated.
- When reacting to someone else's message, address the ideas, not the person. Post only what anyone would comfortably state in a F2F situation.
- Blackboard is not a public internet venue; all postings to it should be considered private and confidential. Whatever is posted on in these online spaces is intended for classmates and professor only. Please do not copy documents and paste them to a publicly accessible website, blog, or other space. If students wish to do so, they have the ethical obligation to first request the permission of the writer(s).

Introduction to Metaphysics

Introductory

(Dates: Aug. 24th - Sept. 2nd)

Preliminary Lectures

- The Existential Quantifier

Readings

- Spencer, J., "Ways of being"
- McDaniel, K., "Being and almost nothingness, sections 1 and 2"
- Aristotle, excerpts from the *Categories*
- Strawson, Introduction to *Individuals*

Assignments

- Discussion Board #1 (Due 09/04, 11:59 pm)
-

Ontological Commitment

(Dates: Sept. 7th - 21st)

Preliminary Lectures

- Semantic Compositionality
- Russell's Theory of Descriptions

Readings

- Quine, W. V. O., "On what there is"
- Chisholm, R., "Beyond being and non-being"

Assignments

- Discussion Board #2 (Due 09/23, 11:59 pm)
-

The Problem of Universals: Nominalism & Realism

(Dates: Sept. 23rd - Oct. 7th)

Preliminary Lectures

- Primer on Sets

Readings

- Armstrong, D., *Universals: An Opinionated Introduction*, Ch. 1-3 and 5

Assignments

- Discussion Board #3 (Due 10/09, 11:59 pm)
 - Midterm Exam (Due 10/14, 11:59 pm)
-

Concrete Particulars

(Dates: Oct. 12th - 21st)

Readings

- Armstrong, D. M., *Universals: An Opinionated Introduction*, Ch. 4

Assignments

- Discussion Board #4 (Due 10/23, 11:59 pm)
-

Time & Time Travel

(Dates: Oct. 26th - Nov. 9th)

Readings

- McTaggart, "The unreality of time"
- Hawley, K., "Metaphysics and relativity"
- Stanford Encyclopedia entry on Time
- Lewis, D., "The paradoxes of time travel"

Assignments

- Discussion Board #5 (Due 11/11, 11:59 pm)
-

Identity Through Time & Personal Identity

(Dates: Nov. 16th - 25th)

Readings

- Sider, T., "Four-dimensionalism"

- Parfit, D., "Self Identity"

Assignments

- Discussion Board #6 (Due 11/27, 11:59 pm)
-

Free Will

(Dates: Oct. 25th - Dec. 2nd)

Readings

- Timpe, K., "Free will," Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy
- Levy & McKenna, "Recent work on free will and moral responsibility"

Assignments

- Discussion Board #7 (Due 12/04, 11:59 pm)
- Essay (Due 11/30, 11:59 pm)
- Final Exam (Due 12/09, 11:59 pm)