

# PHIL 4320 — METAPHYSICS

MW, 10:30 – 11:50, PSYCH 306

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Office Hours	By appointment		

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***Free and open discussion is the life-blood of philosophy. Consequently, no student shall be discriminated against on the basis of race, gender, disability, place of national origin, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, political affiliation or any other similar factor. I expect all members of the class to be equally tolerant of differing perspectives and ideologies. Critique, evaluate and analyze the ideas put forward by me and others; do not demean or belittle them.***

Metaphysics is arguably the most abstract theoretical pursuit possible. It is the study, as Aristotle put it, of being *qua* being; the study of the fundamental constitution of reality. In essence, we will only be concerned with the absolutely most general categories of objects and their natures. What is a material substance or particular? Do we have free will? How do we decide what things exist?

It should be obvious that no general theory of the world is complete unless it says something about these kinds of questions. Moreover, there are many questions (from physics to ethics) which cannot be adequately resolved unless one takes some sort of stand on basic metaphysical questions.

**Course Objectives:** First and foremost the goal is to explore some new intellectual terrain. That's it. Why else would you take a course? But if you want specifics:

- To develop a critical understanding of the fundamental nature of reality.
- To develop an ability to clearly express and defend not only your own opinions on these matters, but also the views and arguments of others, *particularly those with whom you disagree.*

## **Materials:**

Required

- Course Packet of readings, available on the course site.

Optional

- A good stiff cup of java!

## **Requirements and Expectations**

This course is an upper division philosophy course. Students will be expected to have academic skills commensurate with its level including: the ability to read complex primary source material, the ability to write clear, well-constructed critical essays, and the ability to engage in articulate and respectful discourse. In addition, I expect all students to be prepared and attentive in class. This means coming to class having done reading assignments and having thought about their

significance, and while in class being an active listener and contributor. Although I will not take attendance, I do expect you to attend every class meeting. You are responsible for all material and announcements made in class, whether you are present or not. No late assignments will be allowed without a University excuse.

PLEASE NOTE: If you have or suspect you have a physical, learning, or psychological disability and require accommodations, please contact the Center for Accommodations and Support Services located in the Union Bldg East, room 106 (747-5148).

**Evaluation:** Assignments must be submitted via the Assignments tab on the left sidebar on Blackboard.

**Three Short 1-2 Page Expository Essays (100 points each; 300 points total, 30% of grade):** These essays will be based on the readings. You may choose to write on any topic covered in the course material.

**One Research Essay (500 points, 50% of grade):** Six pages.

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

**Class Attendance and Participation (200 points total, 20% of grade):** Eight points per class over 25 classes (4 points for attendance, 4 points for participation).

**Total Possible Points for Course: 1000**

**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

Academic integrity is a concern for everyone. By joining the UTEP community every student agrees to abide by the Scholastic Dishonesty Policy. 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

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**Course Schedule:** This is a tentative schedule of classes for the semester. It is a virtual certainty that we will not follow it exactly, so please make sure you know what material we are covering – particularly if you happen to miss class. \* Suggested, background material.

<u>week/day</u>		<u>date</u>	<u>Topic/assignments</u>	<u>Readings (*suggested)</u>
<b>Week 1</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>8/22</b>	Introduction	
<b><u>Metaphysical Realism</u></b>				
	<b>W</b>	<b>8/24</b>	Anti-Realism	Boghossian, from <i>Fear of Knowledge</i> , chapter 3: “Constructing the Facts”  *Putnam, “Models and reality”. (NB: This is a difficult but interesting read involving technical results from logic)
<b>Week 2</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>8/29</b>	Against Anti-Realism	Sider, from <i>Writing the Book of the World</i> , Chapter 3: “Connections”  *Lewis, “Putnam’s Paradox”, pp. 56-68  *Goodman, “The New Riddle of Induction”
	<b>W</b>	<b>8/31</b>	Ontological Commitment	Quine, “On what there is”  Thomasson, “Existence questions”  *Schaffer, “On what grounds what”
<b>Week 3</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>9/5</b>	Labor Day. No Class	
	<b>W</b>	<b>9/7</b>		Catch-up
<b><u>Material Objects</u></b>				
<b>Week 4</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>9/12</b>		Markosian, “What are physical objects?”
	<b>W</b>	<b>9/14</b>		Baker, “Why constitution is not identity”  McDaniel, “Parts and wholes”
<b><u>Time</u></b>				
<b>Week 5</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>9/19</b>	McTaggart’s Argument <b>[First Short Essay Due]</b>	Ingthorsson, from <i>McTaggart’s Paradox</i> , Chapter 3: The Argument  *McTaggart, “The unreality of time”

	W	9/21	Presentism	Zimmerman – “The privileged present”
Week 6	M	9/26	Four-Dimensionalism	Sider – from <i>Four-dimensionalism</i> , Chapter 2 *Maudlin, from <i>Philosophy of Physics</i> , Chapter 4: The Passage of Time *Hawley, “Metaphysics and Relativity” *Turner, “Why Special Relativity is a problem for the A-theory”
	W	9/28	Moving Spotlight	Cameron, TBD *Deasy, “The moving spotlight theory”
<u>Persistence</u>				
Week 7	M	10/3	Perdurance	Sider, “Temporal Parts” Haslanger, “Persistence Through Time”
	W	10/5	Endurance	Fine, “In defense of Three-Dimensionalism”
Week 8	M	10/10	Time Travel	Lewis, “The paradoxes of time travel” *Arnezius, “Time travel: Double your fun”
	W	10/12		Catch-up
<u>Causation</u>				
Week 9	M	10/17	Regularity Theory & INUS Conditions	Loux, from <i>Metaphysics</i> , Chapter 6 Mackie, “Causes and conditions”
	W	10/19	Counterfactual Analysis <b>[Second Short Essay Due]</b>	Lewis, “Causation”
<u>Personal Identity</u>				
Week 10	M	10/24	Body Criterion & Psych Criterion I	Parfit, from <i>Reasons and Persons</i> chapter 10, sections 75-78 Parfit, from <i>Reasons and Persons</i> chapter 11, sections 80-82
	W	10/26	Body Criterion & Psych Criterion II	Thomson, “People and their Bodies” Williams, “The Self and the Future”
Week 11	M	10/31	The Unimportance of Identity	Parfit, <i>Reasons and Persons</i> chapter 12, sections 87-90 Lewis “Survival and Identity”

<u>Free Will</u>				
	W	11/2	Incompatibilism	Van Inwagen, from <i>Metaphysics</i> , Chapter 12: Freedom of the Will
Week 12	M	11/7		Markosian, "Agent Causation as the Solution to All the Compatibilist's Problems"
	W	11/9	Two Versions of Compatibilism <b>[Third Short Essay Due]</b>	Frankfurt, "Freedom of the will and the concept of a person"  McKenna, "Reasons-responsive theories of freedom"
<u>Social Ontology</u>				
Week 13	M	11/14	Groups and Institutions: Mereology	Hawley, "Social mereology" *Barnes, "Going beyond the fundamental, Feminism in contemporary metaphysics"
	W	11/16	Groups and Institutions: Embodiment	Fine, "The identity of social groups"
Week 14	M	11/21	Race & Gender	Haslanger, "Gender and Race: (What) are they? (What) do we want them to be?"
	W	11/23	Sexual Orientation	Diamond, "What is sexual orientation?"
Week 15	M	11/28		Catch-up
	F	12/9	<b>[Final Paper Due by 1:00 pm]</b>	