

PHIL 4320 — METAPHYSICS

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Office Wednesday, 12-2,
Hours & by appointment

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? What is a property? 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:

- **Short Critical Essay (15% of total grade):** 1,000 words.
- **Long Critical Essay (25% of total grade):** 2,500 words
- **Midterm exam (25% of total grade):** in class exam
- **Final exam (35% of total grade):** In class cumulative exam.

The grading scale for this class is given below:

A	B	C	D	F
>89.5%	>79.5%	>69.5%	>59.5%	≤59.5%

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

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.

Date	Topic	Readings
Section 1	Introductory	Strawson, Intro to <i>Individuals</i> Aristotle, excerpts from <i>The Categories</i>
Section 2	Ontology	*Meinong, "The theory of objects" *Russell, "On denoting" Quine, "On what there is" Chisholm, "Beyond being and nonbeing" Lewis & Lewis, "Holes" Thomasson, "Fictional entities" Schaffter, On what grounds what
Section 3	Properties	Armstrong, "The problem" Armstrong, "Primitive Natural Classes" Armstrong, "Resemblance Nominalism" Armstrong, "Universals as attributes"
Section 4	Particulars	Macdonald, "Material Substances" *Armstrong, "Particulars as Bundles of Universals"
Section 5	Time & Persistence	McTaggart, The Unreality of Time Theodore Sider, Chapter 2 of <i>Four Dimensionalism</i> , Against Presentism Theodore Sider, <i>Four Dimensionalism</i>