

PHIL 340 002 Knowledge and Reality: Introduction to Metaphysics

Time: 3.30pm - 5pm, Tues Thurs

Location: Mathematics Annex 1100

Teachers

Jasper Heaton (she/they) - Instructor

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Office Hours: Weds, 12pm, on Zoom (link on Canvas)

Evan Cave - Teaching Assistant

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Course Description

Metaphysics includes a whole range of different topics in philosophy, and we will start this course by thinking about what it means to do metaphysics. We will then explore the philosophy of time and consider whether time exists, whether time passes, and what it means to exist "in time." We will then consider the topic of ontology and the question, "what exists?", and will explore this in tandem with the metaphysics of modality and consider the question, do other possible worlds exist? Following this we will look at the metaphysics of identity. We will explore different theories of how your identity persists through time, and we will also look at the relationship between one's identity and the society one lives in and consider the question, is your identity really *yours*? We will then close out the course by doing social metaphysics and the metaphysics of social constructions. We will think about what it means to say a social construct is "real", and explore how the metaphysics of social construction intersects with political projects like feminism and anti-racism.

This course is designed to give you sufficient background in metaphysics while also introducing you to some recent developments in the field of metaphysics.

Learning Activities

In this course you will:

- Read course materials and attend lectures
- Participate in group discussions
- Write essays
- Give and receive feedback
- Ask questions

Assessments and Weighting

PLEASE NOTE - all written assignments will be completed in-class. **You cannot complete written assignments outside of class.**

Weekly Reading Responses, 15% of Final Grade

Due **BEFORE CLASS** every Thursday (excluding week 1)

Recorded submission

Submit an audio or video file of yourself asking a question about (one of) the reading(s) of that week

Your question should be:

- Roughly one minute long
- Related to a concept, theme, or passage in that reading
- Motivated - that is, you should say why you are asking this question
- Audible (it is your responsibility to ensure that your submission is audible)

Weekly Participation, 20% of Final Grade

Submitted in class every Thursday (excluding week 1)

Completed with your discussion group

Make sure the name and student number of every member of your group is on the file you submit

4 Sentence Essay x2, 30% of Final Grade (15% per essay)

A philosophical essay that defends a thesis against an objection in 4 sentences

These essays will be written **in class**

- Essay 1: written **in class Feb 12**
- Essay 2: written **in class March 12**

Term Paper, 35% of Final Grade

A philosophical essay that defends a thesis against an objection

- Due April 9
- 1,500 words
- The essay will be written **in class** during **weeks 13 and 14**

Class Schedule, Topics, and Reading List

PLEASE NOTE - you should complete the week's readings **before class on Thursday that week**

Week	Topic and Activity	Reading
Week 1 Jan 6, 8	Introduction to Metaphysics	Peter van Inwagen, Meghan Sullivan, & Sara Bernstein, Metaphysics , read sections 1 and 5
Week 2 Jan 13, 15	The Reality and the Passage of Time	J. E. M. McTaggart, the Unreality of Time Optional: Oets Bouwsma, the Mystery of Time
Week 3 Jan 20, 22	Is the Future Open?	Elizabeth Barnes & Ross Cameron, Back to the Open Future
Week 4 Jan 27, 29	The Objects of Time	Helen Steward, Actions as Processes
Week 5 Feb 3, 5	Ontology and Existence	Willard V. Quine, On What There Is Amie Thomasson, Existence Questions
Week 6 Feb 10, 12	Modality and Possible Worlds 4 Sentence Essay Due Feb 12	David Lewis, On the Plurality of Worlds , read sections 1.1 and 1.2, pages 1-20
Week 7 READING WEEK	No class	No reading
Week 8 Feb 24, 26	Personal Identity: Identity Over Time	John Locke, Of Identity and Diversity , read from section 7, page 6, to end of section 28, page 27

Week 9 March 3, 5	Personal Identity: Identity and Ideology	Louis Althusser, Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses , read from section “On the Reproduction of the Relations of Production”
Week 10 March 10, 12	Realism and Ordinary Objects 4 Sentence Essay Due March 12	Amie Thomasson, Metaphysical Arguments Against Ordinary Objects
Week 11 March 17, 19	Realism and Social Construction	Sally Haslanger, Social Construction: Myth and Reality
Week 12, March 24, 26	Realism and Social Construction	Sally Haslanger, Social Construction: The “Debunking” Project
Week 13 March 31, April 2	Term Paper	No reading
Week 14 April 7, 9	Term Paper	No reading

Course Policies

Content Warning and Classroom Policy

In this course we will cover a number of topics, issues, and real world events that may have affected the personal lives of students taking this course and the teachers teaching it. While it is important that we be able to freely pursue academic inquiry into these issues, it is equally important we be attentive and sensitive to the different ways people might be affected by these issues and by our study of them. As a student it is your right to bring your personal and lived experiences to your studies in this course. It is also your duty to be respectful of other people’s experiences, no matter how different they are from your own. At its best the study of philosophy is collaborative, constructive, and respectful of individuality. I hope that throughout this course we will all do our best to embody these norms.

University Policies and Support

UBC provides resources to support student learning and to maintain healthy lifestyles but recognizes that sometimes crises arise and so there are additional resources to access including those for survivors of sexual violence. UBC values respect for the person and ideas of all members of the academic community. Harassment and discrimination are not tolerated nor is suppression of academic freedom. UBC provides appropriate accommodation for students with disabilities and for religious observances. UBC values academic honesty and students are expected to acknowledge the ideas generated by others and to uphold the highest academic standards in all of their actions. Details of the policies and how to access support are available on [the UBC Senate website](#).

Policy on Late Work

You are expected to submit your assignments by the due date. Failure to do so may result in late penalties or a fail grade for the course.

If **FOR ANY REASON** you are not able to submit your work on time **please contact either the instructor or the TA** to request an extension.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism, which is intellectual theft, occurs where an individual submits or presents the oral or written work of another person as his or her own. Scholarship quite properly rests upon examining and referring to the thoughts and writings of others. However, when another person's words (i.e. phrases, sentences, or paragraphs), ideas, or entire works are used, the author must be acknowledged in the text, in footnotes, in endnotes, or in another accepted form of academic citation. Where direct quotations are made, they must be clearly delineated (for example, within quotation marks or separately indented). Failure to provide proper attribution is plagiarism because it represents someone else's work as one's own. Plagiarism should not occur in submitted drafts or final works. A student who seeks assistance from a tutor or other scholastic aids must ensure that the work submitted is the student's own. Students are responsible for ensuring that any work submitted does not constitute plagiarism. Students who are in any doubt as to what constitutes plagiarism should consult their instructor before handing in any assignments.

Policy on A.I.

You are not permitted to write assignments with the use of generative A.I. Any assignment completed with A.I. will receive a 0. Repeated offences will result in failing the course.

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