

Philosophy 370: Problems in Analytic Philosophy

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Office Hours: Tuesday 8:50-9:50, Thursday 8:50-9:50

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Course Location and Time: LEA R110, Tuesday & Thursday 11:30-13:00

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is a ‘teaser trailer’ for analytic philosophy and offers a brief introduction to some of the most central issues in the field. Topics from the following subdisciplines will be discussed:

- Unit 1. Metaphysics
 - Realism
 - Nominalism
 - Personal Identity

- Unit 2. Epistemology
 - Analysis of Knowledge
 - Scepticism
 - Induction

- Unit 3. Philosophy of Language
 - Definite Descriptions
 - Proper Names
 - Truth
 - Truth & Meaning

- Unit 4. Metaphilosophy
 - Analyticity
 - Metametaphysics

Typically, we will spend 3-4 weeks on any given unit. We will begin with a brief general introduction to analytic philosophy and then start Unit 1 by discussing the nature and existence of universals and the problem of personal identity. Unit 2 addresses epistemological questions such as ‘What is knowledge?’ and ‘Do we have any knowledge about the external world?’, while Unit 3 is concerned with definite descriptions, proper names and the nature of truth and its relationship to meaning. In Unit 4 we turn towards the questions concerning the methodology of analytic philosophy in general and analytic metaphysics in particular.

REQUIREMENTS

Students who take this course must *complete readings on time* and must *participate in class*. Students are expected to have their texts with them at each class, and students may be called upon at random to discuss or explain parts of the week’s readings. The course presupposes knowledge of first order predicate *logic*.

ASSESSMENT

50% Final essay; deadline: **December 2nd, 2011**

35% Midterm exam: **October 27th, 2011**

15% Student presentations

Late papers will be downgraded at a rate of 1/3 of a grade per day (e.g. from A- to B+, C to C-), including weekend days/holidays. Evidence of a consistent lack of preparation (including non-attendance without a medical excuse) results in a deduction of up to 5% from the course grade. Requests for extensions will be considered (but not automatically granted) only when requested at least 24 hours before the paper is due and substantiated at the time of request by a doctor's note documenting illness. Extensions will not be more than seven days. Class participation will not be formally graded, but enthusiastic and well-informed participation will be taken into account in borderline cases.

Students are urged to read Jim Pryor's excellent guidelines on how to read and write philosophy: <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html> and <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/reading.html>

WEBCT

The webpage for this course is located at <http://www.mcgill.ca/webct/>. It will be used to post the syllabus, readings, and periodic announcements. There is also a discussion function, and you are encouraged to post questions there. I will check regularly and respond to questions. Please feel encouraged to answer each other's questions and to discuss actively on WebCT! You must check the course webpage regularly. **IMPORTANT:** *Final essays must be submitted on WebCT.* Submissions by email or in hard copy will not be considered. If you have technical problems with WebCT, contact ICT customer support at: <http://www.mcgill.ca/mycourses/students/help/>.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures. NB: In cases of doubt I will use the turnitin plagiarism detection software to determine whether submissions are plagiarized (see www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/) for more information).

TEXTBOOKS

This course uses parts of the following textbooks:

- Lycan, W.G., *Philosophy of Language – A Contemporary Introduction*, Routledge.
- Loux, M.J., *Metaphysics – A Contemporary Introduction*, Routledge.

For useful introductory reading **always** read up on the topics discussed in class on:

- [Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#)
- [Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#)

READINGS

(this schedule is tentative and subject to change; readings in square brackets are optional)

Realism

- Loux, M.J., *Metaphysics – A Contemporary Introduction*, ch. 1.
- Russell, B., *The World of Universals*, ch. 9 of his *The Problems of Philosophy*; reprinted in: Loux (2001).
- Armstrong, D., *Universals as Attributes*, in: Loux (2001).

Nominalism

- Loux, M.J., *Metaphysics – A Contemporary Introduction*, ch. 2.
- Quine, W.v.O., ‘On What There Is’, in: Loux (2001).
- Jackson, F., ‘Statements About Universals’, in: Mellor, D.H. and Oliver, A. (eds.), *Properties*, Oxford: OUP, 1997, pp. 89-92.
- Devitt, M., ‘“Ostrich Nominalism” or “Mirage Realism”?’ in: Mellor, D.H. and Oliver, A. (eds.), *Properties*, Oxford: OUP, 1997, pp. 93-100.
- Armstrong, D.M., ‘Against “Ostrich” Nominalism: A Reply to Michael Devitt’, in: Mellor, D.H. and Oliver, A. (eds.), *Properties*, Oxford: OUP, 1997, pp. 101-112.

Personal Identity

- Williams, B., ‘The self and the future’, *Philosophical Review* 79 (1970).
- Parfit, D., *Reasons and Persons*, OUP, (1984), ch. 12 (Reprinted as ‘Why our Identity is not what matters’, in Martin and Barresi (eds) *Personal Identity*).

Analysis of Knowledge

- Bernecker, S. and Dretske, F., ‘Justified True Belief’, in their 2000: 3-6.
- Ayer, A.J., ‘Knowing as Having the Right to Be Sure’, in: Bernecker & Dretske 2000: 7-12.
- Gettier, E. L., ‘Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?’, *Analysis* 23 (1963), 121-123. Reprinted in Bernecker & Dretske 2000: 13-15.
- [Feldman, F., ‘An Alleged Defect in Gettier Counter-Examples’, *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 52 (1974), 68-69. Reprinted in Bernecker & Dretske 2000.]

Sceptical Arguments

- Descartes, R. (1641), *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Meditation 1, Sections 1-8. (pp. 1-2 in Bennett’s edition).
- Moore, G. E., ‘Proof of an External World’, *Proceedings of the British Academy* 25 (1946). Reprinted in Huemer (ed.) and in Moore’s *Philosophical Papers* (Allen & Unwin 1959), 127-50.
- [Unger, P., ‘A Defense of Skepticism’ *The Philosophical Review* 80 (1971): pp. 198-219. Reprinted in Bernecker & Dretske 2000.]

Induction

- Hume, D. (1748), *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Book 1, Part III, esp. §§11-14.
- Russell, B., *The Problems of Philosophy* (OUP, 1959), ch. 6, pp. 60-69.
- Goodman, N., *Fact, Fiction and Forecast* (Harvard UP, 1954), pp. 72-83. Reprinted in Bernecker and Dretske 2000.
- [Reichenbach, H., ‘The Pragmatic Justification of Induction’, reprinted in Bernecker and Dretske 2000.]

Definite Descriptions

- Russell: *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy*, Chapter 16.
- Russell: ‘On Denoting’.
- Strawson: ‘On Referring’.
- Russell: ‘Mr Strawson on Referring’.
- Donnellan: ‘Reference and Definite Descriptions’.
- [Lycan: *The philosophy of language*, ch. 1-2]

Proper Names

- Kripke: *Naming and Necessity*, Lecture 1, pp. 22-34 & Lecture 2.
- Evans: ‘The casual theory of reference’.
- [Searle: ‘Proper Names’.]
- [Putnam: ‘Meaning and Reference’]
- [Stanley: ‘Names and Rigid Designation’.]
- [Lycan: *The philosophy of language*, chs. 3-4]
- [Reimer: ‘Reference’, in *SEP*]

Truth

- Walker: ‘Theories of Truth’.
- Tarski: ‘The Semantic Conception of Truth and the Foundations of Semantics’.
- [Kirkham: *Theories of Truth*, MIT Press (1992).]
- [Horwich: ‘The minimalist conception of truth’ in: *Truth* Blackburn & Simons, OUP.]

Truth and Meaning

- Davidson: ‘Truth and Meaning’.
- Davidson: ‘Reply to Foster’.
- [Lewis: ‘Languages and Language’]
- [Larson and Segal, *Knowledge of Meaning: An Introduction to Semantic Theory*, MIT Press (1995), ch. 2. Reprinted as ‘Knowledge of Meaning and Theories of Truth’ in Ludlow, P. (ed.), *Readings in the Philosophy of Language*, MIT Press (1997).]
- [Lycan: *The philosophy of language*, ch. 9]

Analyticity

- Quine, W.v.O., ‘Two Dogmas of Empiricism’, *The Philosophical Review* 60 (1951), pp. 20-43.
- Grice, H.P. and Strawson, P.F., ‘In Defense of a Dogma’, *The Philosophical Review* 65 (1956), pp. 141-158.
- Williamson, T. *The Philosophy of Philosophy*, Oxford, Blackwell: 2007: excerpts from ch. 1.

Metametaphysics

- Carnap, R. 1950. ‘Empiricism, Semantics, and Ontology’., in: *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 4: 20-40. Reprinted as an appendix to *Meaning and Necessity: A Study in Semantics and Modal Logic*. University of Chicago Press.
- Chalmers, D.J. (2009). ‘Ontological Anti-realism’, in: Chalmers, D.J. et. al. (eds.), *Metametaphysics – New Essays on the Foundations of Ontology*: 77-129.

In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University’s control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.