

Philosophy 421: Metaphysics

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Course Location and Time: ENGTR 2120, M & W 08:35-09:55
Term and Year: Fall 2019

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is a survey of central issues in metaphysics and offers an overview of both classical and present-day topics. It is divided into eleven topics (not including the introductory material covered in the first week).

Schedule: (this schedule is tentative and subject to change)

- Unit 1. Free Will
- Unit 2. Personal Identity
- Unit 3. Time and Time Travel
- Unit 4. Realism
- Unit 5. Nominalism
- Unit 6. Truth
- Unit 7. Causation
- Unit 8. Constitution
- Unit 9. Vagueness
- Unit 10. Analyticity
- Unit 11. Metametaphysics

Typically, we will spend 1-2 weeks on any given unit.

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 propositional and first order predicate *logic* (Prerequisite: Introduction to Deductive Logic 1).

FORMAT

There will be two lectures per week, although as much time as possible will be devoted to discussion. Normally, the first class of each week will involve a presentation of the relevant literature and the second will consist of a mixture of lecturing and discussions. Students are required to *prepare short presentations* for their tutorial groups (see below).

ASSESSMENT

Attendance and Participation: 10%

Midterm Exam: 30%

Final Essay: 60%.

Additionally, each student must prepare a short presentation together with a group of fellow students. Failure to participate in a group presentation will result in the deduction of 6% from the final course grade.

Students are asked 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>

EXTENSIONS

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 final 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.

MYCOURSES

The webpage for this course is located at <https://mycourses2.mcgill.ca/>. It will be used to post the syllabus, readings, and periodic announcements. You must check the course webpage regularly. If you have technical problems with MyCourses, contact ICT customer support at: <http://www.mcgill.ca/mycourses/students/help/>.

IMPORTANT: *papers must be submitted on MyCourses as MS Word documents.* Submissions by email or in hard copy will not be considered.

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](#)

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 (see www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/ for more information).

Submissions to this course will be automatically checked for plagiarism by means of Turnitin or equivalent software.

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No audio or video recording of any kind is allowed in class without the explicit permission of the instructor.

In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded. This does not apply to courses in which acquiring proficiency in a language is one of the objectives.

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