INTRODUCTION TO METAPHYSICS  PHIL252 (AO1)

Metaphysics concerns the ultimate nature of reality. This course introduces some of its central topics, including: matter, time, God, free will, mind, persons, and kinds.

PREREQUISITES  None.

PLACE/TIME  CLE C112, Mondays & Thursdays 11:30am-12:50pm (Fall 2014)

INSTRUCTOR  DR Mike Raven ( mike@mikeraven.net | http://mikeraven.net/ )

OFFICE HOURS  CLE B323  Monday/Thursday 2:30-3:30, or by appointment.

WEBSITE  CourseSpaces.

TEXTS  •  VAN INWAGEN, Metaphysics (4th edition)
       •  Other readings available online (see CourseSpaces).

APPROACH

"Philosophy is the strangest of subjects: it aims at rigour and yet is unable to establish any results; it attempts to deal with the most profound questions and yet constantly finds itself preoccupied with the trivialities of language; and it claims to be of great relevance to rational enquiry and the conduct of our life and yet is almost completely ignored. But perhaps what is strangest of all is the passion and intensity with which it is pursued by those who have fallen in its grip." (Kit Fine)

Philosophy is a skilled activity which strives for clarity, precision, and rigor in our understanding of the world.

This philosophical skill is best learned by practice. One can no more learn philosophy without practice than one can learn to play a musical instrument without practice. And one can no more learn philosophy merely by reading it than one can learn to dance merely by reading about dancing. Thus, while the course focuses on some central philosophical questions, the main emphasis is on how to do philosophy: to think with clarity, precision, and rigor.

But clear, precise, and rigorous thought is inseparable from the clear, precise, and rigorous communication of thought. Your practice in philosophy will consist in reading the material, discussing the material in class, and communicating it in your written work. Assignments tend to be short, but the standards are high.

Philosophers might initially seem to use obscure technical terms disconnected from ordinary language, to fuss pedantically over insignificant details, and to get caught up in abstract disputes disconnected from everyday life. As a result, some students might initially find philosophy to be unfamiliar, difficult, and irrelevant. But this first impression is misleading. Technical terms are used to avoid unclarity and imprecision, details are fusses over to achieve the strictest rigor, and the abstract is focused on to guard against everyday biases.

Philosophy requires patience and discipline. But it can be rewarding, especially as one hones the skill of sharpening one's ideas and isolating the justifications for them—a skill which can be used in any academic discipline, and in ordinary life.
**EVALUATION**

The grade you earn depends solely on your performance in this class. Submitting all the work is required to pass. There is no extra credit. Grades are calculated on the University's standard scale: 

- **A+**: >90 
- **A**: 89 - 85 
- **A-**: 84 - 80 
- **B+**: 79 - 77 
- **B**: 76 - 73 
- **B-**: 72 - 70 
- **C+**: 69 - 65 
- **C**: 64 - 60 
- **D**: 59 - 50 
- **F**: <50

**ASSIGNMENTS**

- 5 short assignments (90%)
- Tentative Due Dates: SEP19, OCT10, OCT31, NOV21, DEC3

**PARTICIPATION**

Engaging with the course material in and out of class (10%)

This includes (but is not limited to) discussion in class and with the instructor during office hours or over email.

**LATENESS**

If you do not expect to complete an assignment on time, submit what you have done on time. Except in extreme circumstances (instructor's discretion), extensions require documentation of a legitimate reason before the due date and will not extend past when timely assignments are returned. Late work is penalized one letter grade per day late and does not receive comments.

**CONDUCT**

You agree to abide by a social contract of conduct by enrolling in this course:

**CLASS**

Attending and contributing to class helps train your philosophical skills. But it is not just for your benefit, but also for your classmates. Please be respectful: be prepared to contribute, but do not interrupt, bully, ramble, distract, or insult your classmates.

**CONTACT**

You are welcome to seek guidance in office hours or by email. Please be respectful: communicate professionally, avoid wasting time by asking questions already answered by official sources (e.g. syllabus, course site, class), and allow ample time for replies.

**INTEGRITY**

Plagiarism is not tolerated. Ignorance is no excuse. It is your responsibility to learn the university's policies on academic integrity [http://web.uvic.ca/calendar2014/FACS/Unln/UARe/PoAcI.html](http://web.uvic.ca/calendar2014/FACS/Unln/UARe/PoAcI.html).

**RESOURCES**

**ADVICE**

The material is best learned by reflecting on the readings and class discussions, participating, and preparing for assignments in advance of the deadlines. Consult the instructor and these resources:

- **VOCAB** [http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/vocab/](http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/vocab/)
- **READING** [http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/reading.html](http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/reading.html)
  [http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html](http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html)

Bennett & Goroviz (1997) "Improving Academic Writing", Teaching Philosophy 20.

**DISABILITIES**

Consult with the Resource Center and instructor at the beginning of the term for resources and accommodations.
**SCHEDULE**

The chapters from VAN INWAGEN survey the topics to be discussed. Read them prior to the other readings (for orientation) as well as concurrently with them (for synergy). (Dates are tentative; consult CourseSpaces for the official assigned readings.)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Chapters/Readings</th>
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| **INTRODUCTION** (SEP 4, 8, 11, 15, 18) | - RAVEN, *Philosophy & Logic Primer*  
- BOGHOSSIAN, *Fear of Knowledge*, chapters 1-4  
- VAN INWAGEN, *Metaphysics*, chapters 1, 5 |
| **MATTER** (SEP 22, 25) | - BERKELEY, *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*, §§1-2  
- VAN INWAGEN, *Metaphysics*, chapter 3 |
| **TIME** (SEP 29, OCT 2) | - HINCHLIFF, “The Puzzle of Change”  
- MONTON, “Prolegomena to Any Future Physics-Based Metaphysics,” §§2-4  
- VAN INWAGEN, *Metaphysics*, chapter 4 |
| **GOD** (OCT 6, 9, 16) | - CRAIG & MORELAND, “The Kalām Cosmological Argument”  
- MONTON, “Prolegomena to Any Future Physics-Based Metaphysics,” §§1-5, 6  
- VAN INWAGEN, *Metaphysics*, chapters 6-7 |
| **FREE WILL** (OCT 20, 23, 27) | - LIBET, “Do We Have Free Will?”  
- BAYNE, “Libet and the Case for Free Will Scepticism”  
- WOLF, “Asymmetrical Freedom”  
- VAN INWAGEN, *Metaphysics*, chapter 12 |
| **MIND** (OCT 30, NOV 3, 6) | - DESCARTES, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Meditations I-II, VI  
- Krippke, Naming and Necessity, Lecture III (pp. 144-155)  
- VAN INWAGEN, *Metaphysics*, chapter 10 |
| **PERSONS** (NOV 13, 17, 20) | - PARFIT, “The Unimportance of Identity”  
- THOMSON, “People and Their Bodies”  
- VAN INWAGEN, *Metaphysics*, chapter 11 |
| **KINDS** (NOV 24, 27, DEC 1) | - Krippke, Naming and Necessity, Lecture III (pp. 106-144)  
- APPIAH, “But Would That Still Be Me?”  