

Philosophy 352: Metaphysics

Class times: Monday, 3:30—6:20pm CLE A203

Instructor: Dr Di Yang (pronouns: she & her)
Office: CLE B309
Office hours: Thursday 11:30am—12:50pm and by appointment
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Texts: None. All required readings will be posted on CourseSpaces.

Course description:

This course will explore two topics in metaphysics: free will and time. Typically, a comprehensive treatment of these topics requires us to look at related issues in ethics, epistemology, phenomenology, philosophy of science, as well as research in the social, biological, and physical sciences. The aim of this course is to offer a sound metaphysical grounding in these topics so as to allow students to investigate them in a more comprehensive manner, should they wish to do so in the future. During the first part of this course we will focus on the problem of free will. We start with the classical positions in the debate and move on to three influential developments that occurred in the 1960, which have shaped contemporary debates on this issue. In the second half of the course, we turn our attention to the metaphysics of time. We begin with McTaggart's influential argument that time is unreal, and go on to examine some related topics: e.g. do past and future things exist? How do material objects persist through time? What does it mean to say that time is tensed? Is time tensed? And in what sense might time travel be possible?

Evaluation: 1st paper (50%) ~2,500 words Due Monday February 24th
2nd paper (50%) ~2,500 words Due Monday April 13th by 12:00pm (noon)

Policy on late assignments: Late assignments will be penalized by one letter grade for each calendar day (or portion thereof) that they are late. For example, an assignment which would have received an A, but was submitted one day (or portion thereof) after the due date, will receive an A-. Exceptions will be made in cases of illness or family emergency, if accompanied by proper documentation.

Academic integrity: Students are expected to abide by the [University's Policy on Academic Integrity](#). And it is the students' responsibility to understand what constitutes [plagiarism](#) and to familiarize themselves with proper [citation](#) practices.

Territorial Acknowledgement: The University of Victoria is committed to acknowledging and respecting the Lekwungen peoples on whose traditional territory the university stands, and the Songhees, Esquimalt, and WSÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day. For more information about support for indigenous students and efforts to foster reconciliation, please visit the [UVic Office of Indigenous Academic & Community Engagement](#).

Schedule of topics and readings:

This schedule is provisional and subject to revision. Updates will be announced in class and on CourseSpaces.

It is recommended that students do the readings for each week in the order listed.

Week 1 (Jan. 6th): Classical Compatibilism and Libertarianism

- Ayer, A. J. (1972). Freedom and necessity. In his *Philosophical essays* (pp. 271-284). Palgrave Macmillan, London.
- Excerpt from Campbell, C. A. (1951). Is 'freewill' a pseudo-problem?. *Mind*, 60(240), 441-465.

Week 2 (Jan. 13th): The Consequence Argument and Hard Incompatibilism

- Van Inwagen, P. (1975). The incompatibility of free will and determinism. *Philosophical studies*, 27(3), 185-199.
- Strawson, G. (1994). The impossibility of moral responsibility. *Philosophical studies*, 75(1), 5-24.

Week 3 (Jan. 20th): Alternate Possibilities

- Frankfurt, H. G. (1969). Alternate possibilities and moral responsibility. *The journal of philosophy*, 66(23), 829-839.
- Fischer, J. M. (2003). Frankfurt-style compatibilism. In Gary Watson (ed.), *Free Will* (190-211). Oxford University Press.

Week 4 (Jan. 27th): Reactive Attitudes

- Strawson, P. F. (1963). Freedom and resentment. Reprinted in his *Freedom and resentment and other essays* (pp. 1-28). Routledge.

Week 5 (Feb. 3rd): Recent Developments

- Frankfurt, H. (1971). Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person. *The Journal of Philosophy*, 68(1), 5-20.
- Pereboom, D. (1995). Determinism al dente. *Noûs*, 29(1), 21-45.

Week 6 (Feb. 10th): Recent Developments continued

- Kane, R. (2003). Free Will: New Directions for an Ancient Problem.

Week 7 (Feb. 17th): Reading break

****First paper due Monday Feb. 24th****

Week 8 (Feb. 24th): McTaggart and the Unreality of Time

- McTaggart, J. M. E. (1908). The unreality of time. *Mind*, 457-474.

Week 9 (Mar. 2nd): Fatalism

- **Guest lecture by Mike Raven**; Readings TBA

Week 10 (Mar. 9th): Presentism vs. Eternalism

- Rea, M. C. (2003). Four-dimensionalism. *The Oxford handbook of metaphysics*, 246-80.

Week 11 (Mar. 16th): Perdurantism vs. Endurantism

- Hinchliff, M. (1996). The puzzle of change. *Philosophical perspectives*, 10, 119-136.
- Merricks, T. (1995). On the incompatibility of enduring and perduring entities. *Mind*, 104(415), 523-531.

Week 12 (Mar. 23rd): Tense

- Mellor, D. H. (1981). The unreality of tense. Reprinted in Le Poidevin & MacBeath (eds.), *The Philosophy of Time*, 47-59. Oxford University Press.
- Lowe, E. J. (1998). Tense and persistence. In Le Poidevin (ed.), *Questions of Time and Tense*, 43-59. Oxford University Press.

Week 13 (Mar. 30th): Time Travel

- Lewis, D. (1976). The paradoxes of time travel. *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 13(2), 145-152.

****Second paper due Monday April 13th by 12:00pm (noon)****

Important administrative dates:

Sunday, Jan. 19th: Last day for 100% reduction of fees.

Wednesday, Jan. 22nd: Last day for adding courses that begin in the second term.

Sunday, Feb. 9th: Last day for 50% reduction of tuition fees.

Saturday, Feb. 29th: Last day for withdrawing from second term courses without penalty of failure.