

SYLLABUS

We talk about a world, distinct from our experiences, populated with times, causes, persons, and much else. What should we make of such talk? Are there such things, and what does our talk of them reveal about the nature of reality? This course will investigate a series of contemporary topics in metaphysics, and explore metaphysical methodology in service of discovering what exists.

Instructors:

Lecturer

Christopher A. Vogel

1120A Skinner Building

email: cavogel@umd.edu

OFFICE HOURS | Wednesdays NOON–1PM & by appt.

Textbook:

Various articles posted online on ELMS (<http://elms.umd.edu>)

Assessment:

Each student's success in learning the material for this course will be evaluated based on their performance on written summaries of assigned articles, a long-form writing assignment, and in-class pop quizzes:

Assignment	Due Date	Weight
Reading Summaries	various	45% of grade
Writing Assignment	May 19th	35% of grade
Writing Meeting	Various	10% of grade
Quizzes	Various	10% of grade

The largest portion of each student's grade are the collective summaries assigned every few weeks. Students are assigned different article based on their last name, as indicated in the *Course Schedule*. Those summaries are due by NOON the Friday before the article is assigned for the class to read. For example, if a student is assigned to summarize "The Nightingale and the Rose" by Oscar Wilde, to be discussed in class on Monday, 2/14/2004 that student would need to have read, summarized, and submitted that summary by NOON on Friday, 2/11/2004.

Quizzes will be administered during any class session in which a student uses an electronic device, as indicated below (see: '*In-Class Participation*'). Quizzes can only be made up if the student has a university-approved reason for missing class (see: '*Missed Classes*').

Grading and Evaluation

Assignments will (generally) be graded on a ten (10) point scale, with grades assigned as following:

Fail: <2; 'D': 2-3.99; 'C': 4-5.99; 'B': 6-7.99; 'A': 8-10

with a third of each grade range devoted to +/- grading (e.g. 'B-': 6-6.66). In order to pass the course, each student must complete all assignments.

Late Assignments

Assignments are due on the dates indicated in the *Course Schedule*. Late assignments will NOT be accepted. A student's late assignment will only be accepted if the student demonstrates that the circumstances that caused the assignment to be late were both unexpected and unduly burdensome, which will be determined by the course instructor.

Course Conduct:

Academic Honesty

Each student is responsible for their own work. While students are encouraged to discuss course material both inside and outside class, each assignment/exam should be the product of the student's own thinking. Any apparent improper use of the intellectual work of others will be submitted to the Student Honor Council. Students are encouraged to review the university's Code of Academic Integrity (<http://www.president.umd.edu/policies/iii100a.html>), as the policies stipulated in that code will be exceptionlessly adhered to during this course.

Hybrid Component

This course is a "hybrid" course, meaning that some substantive component is executed online. That is, instead of meeting in-class for the three(3)-credit hours per week, a portion of those hours will consist of online interactions through ELMS. We'll be treating our Friday meetings in this manner. Available on every Friday by 8 am, an online "module" will be posted, with some brief instructions about that week's online interaction. Sometimes this will consist of material from external sources, detailing interesting real-life examples the engage with metaphysical considerations; other times, these modules will contain online lectures, devoting in-class time for discussion of that material. Each student will be responsible for completing these modules prior to class on the preceding Monday (in addition to the material to be covered for the Monday in the *Course Schedule*). In spirit, this is a MWF course, whereby the Friday meetings are online, and atemporal.

In-Class Participation

Students are expected to read the course material prior to coming to each class session, and are also expected to contribute to discussion during lectures. This participation should be conducted with civility and respect for course instructors and fellow students. In this vein, any in-class use of wireless-network-enabled electronic devices is prohibited during this course. These devices invariably lead to distracting and disrespectful behavior during class sessions, even for students not tempted by the allure of these devices. **Thus, any use of laptop computers, tablet computers, smart phones, mobile phones, two-way messaging devices, pagers, or any other electronic communication device during class sessions is prohibited. Violation of this prohibition will be immediately followed by a Quiz administered to the class.**

Participation in class discussion is expected, though not explicitly evaluated. However, the degree and quality of a student's participation in class discussion can bear positively on a student's final course grade.

Missed Classes

-Due to Illness

Regular attendance and participation in this class is the best way to grasp the course material. However, in the event that a class must be missed due to an illness, the policy in this class, in conformity with the University's Attendance Policy (<http://president.umd.edu/policies/v100g.html>) is as follows:

For every medically necessary absence from class, a reasonable effort should be made by the

student to notify the instructor prior to class. When returning to class, students should bring a note identifying the reason for the absence in order to inform their instructor that the absence was due to illness (as opposed to, say, laziness).

If a student is absent for any 'Grading Event' (i.e., any class day with an exam, quiz, or in which an assignment is due) they are required to notify the instructor of their absence as soon as possible (preferably in advance of their absence), and upon returning to class, the student must bring documentation of the illness, signed by a health care professional. Failure to do so will result in a considerably lower grade on the relevant exam or assignment.

-Due to Religious Observance

Students will not be penalized for missing class sessions due to religious observances. The *Course Schedule* is designed to minimize possible conflicts between students' academic and religious commitments. However, all students should review the *Course Schedule* within the first two(2) weeks of the term and determine any potential conflicts between their religious commitments and their responsibilities for this course. They should then inform their instructors of any such conflicts. Arrangements should be made between the student and their instructor to enable the student to satisfy their course responsibilities without undermining their religious commitments.

Correspondence with Instructors

Electronic mail has become the chief medium for out-of-class communication between university instructors and students. Because of the impersonal nature of this medium, email correspondence between students and instructors should be clear and respectful. A respectful email includes a salutation, the full name of the correspondent, and abides by English grammar rules. Correspondence that is not respectful, in this sense, will likely be ignored by instructors.

Accommodating Students with Disabilities

The University is committed to the accessibility of higher education. In light of this commitment, any student with a disability should contact the course instructor so that any needed accommodations can be made to establish an equitable learning environment. Also, any student with a disability is encouraged to contact Disability Support Services (<http://www.counseling.umd.edu/DSS/>) to learn about the resources available to them.

COURSE SCHEDULE

The following indicates the timeline for reading the articles found on ELMS (<http://elms.umd.edu>), and the due dates for reading summaries based on the student's last name (e.g. ↗ A-K). Each student is expected to have read the relevant article by the dates indicated below.

INTRODUCTION: METAPHYSICS AND METHODOLOGY

1/25..... WHAT IS METAPHYSICS?

1/30..... REALISM & NOMINALISM
Russell, B (1912). "The World of Universals" from *Problems of Philosophy*
Quine, WVO. (1948) "On What There Is"

2/1..... TROPES
Williams, DC. (1953). "The Elements of Being"

2/6..... APPLICATION
Lewis, D. and Lewis, S. (1970). "Holes"

PART I: PERSONS AND PERSISTENCE

2/8..... PSYCHOLOGISM
Shoemaker, S. (1970). "Persons and Their Past"

2/13..... MATERIALISM
(↗ L-Z) Shoemaker, S. (1984). "Personal Identity: A Materialist Account"

2/15..... DUALISM
Swinburne, R. (1984). "Personal Identity: the Dualist Theory"

2/20..... WHAT MATTERS
(↗ A-K) Parfit, D. (1971). "Personal Identity"

PART II: TIME

2/22..... NO TIME
McTaggart, JME. (1908). "The Unreality of Time"

2/27..... B-THEORY
Smart, JJC. (1963). "The Space-time World"

3/1..... BLOCK THEORY
Broad, CD. (1923). "The General Problem of Time and Change"

3/6..... PRESENTISM
(↗ L-Z) Prior, AN. (1972). "The Notion of the Present"

3/8..... TIME TRAVEL
Lewis, D. (1976). "The Paradoxes of Time Travel"
Heinlein, R. (1959). "All You Zombies"

PART III: MODALITY

- 3/13 MODALITY
(📖 A-K) Plantinga, A. (1979). *The Nature of Necessity* Ch. 1
- 3/15 MODALITY
Plantinga, A. (1979). *The Nature of Necessity* Ch. 2
- 3/20 & 3/22..... ❀❀ SPRING BREAK ❀❀
NO CLASS!
- 3/22 IDENTITY AND NECESSITY
Chisholm, R. (1967). “Identity through Possible Worlds: Some Questions”
- 3/27 MODAL REALISM: OVERVIEW
(📖 L-Z) Lewis, D. (1986). *On the Plurality of Worlds*, Ch. 1, §1.1 and §1.2
- 3/29 MODAL REALISM: COSTS & BENEFITS
Lewis, D. (1986). *On the Plurality of Worlds*, Ch. 1 §1.4 and §1.5

PART IV: CAUSATION

- 4/3 CAUSATION
Russell, B. (1912). “On the Notion of Cause”
- 4/5 CAUSATION IN SCIENCE
Anscombe, GEM. (1981). “Causality and Determination”
- 4/10 REGULARITY
Mackie, JL. (1965). “Causes and Conditions”
- 4/12 COUNTERFACTUAL CAUSATION
Lewis, D. (1973). “Causation”
- 4/17 COUNTERFACTUALS & PROBLEMS
(📖 A-K) Kim, J. (1973). “Causes and Counterfactuals”
- 4/19 COUNTERFACTUALS & (MORE) PROBLEMS
Horwich, P. (1987). “Lewis’ Programme”
- 4/24 & 26 STUDENT MEETINGS
NO CLASS!
- 5/1 & 5/3 STUDENT MEETINGS
NO CLASS!

PART V: METHODOLOGY REDUX

- 5/8 EXTERNALISM AND ONTOLOGY
Quine, WVO. (1948). “On What There Is”
(Re-read this. Yes, really.)
Sider, T. (2011). *Writing the Book of the World*, Ch. 1
- 5/10 AGAINST EXTERNALISM
Pietroski, P. (2005). “Meaning Before Truth” (selected sections)
- 5/19 WRITING ASSIGNMENT
(📖 A-Z, i.e. every enrolled student) Due by NOON via ELMS.