

Course Information:

Title: PHIL 410—Metaphysics
Time: MWF 12:20-1:15
Location: CH 111
Prerequisites: None (though previous study of philosophy will certainly be helpful and is *strongly* recommended)

(Note that this course does *NOT* fulfill the Ethics GE requirement)

Instructor Information:

Dr. Kevin Timpe
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www.sandiego.edu/~ktimpe

Office: Founders 165A
Office Hours: 11:05 am - 12:20 pm MWF (Founders 165A)
7:45 – 9:00 pm W (Missions Café)
Office Phone: 260.7768

Course Description:

This course is devoted to the branch of philosophy known as metaphysics. It is, however, notoriously difficult to define what metaphysics is. Ancient philosophers defined metaphysics as the study of “being as such” or “first causes.” But perhaps a more helpful description is that metaphysics is concerned with the most fundamental structures of reality as a whole.

The two main goals for this course are:

- (i) for students to learn how contemporary philosophers have approached traditional metaphysical issues, and
- (ii) for students themselves to think philosophically about the same topic.

To fulfill objective (i), we will be examining a number of influential contemporary texts and issue in metaphysics. While knowledge of what other philosophers have thought is essential to success in this course, this is not merely a course designed to get you to repeat or memorize data. Students are expected and required to engage the material themselves. Thus, (ii) is essential as well. That is, students should begin trying to construct a coherent metaphysical account of reality.

Texts:

- (a) E. J. Lowe, *A Survey of Metaphysics* (Oxford University Press 2002)
- (b) Lewis Vaughn, *Writing Philosophy* (Oxford University Press 2006)
- (c) Additional readings will all be available via E-reserve (**ER**) through Copley Library:

<http://copleylib.sandiego.edu/eres/courseindex.aspx?error=&page=search>

ER password: phil410

This course will also make use of **WebCT**. Students are responsible for regularly checking WebCT to keep current with the course schedule, as well as for various handouts and assignments.

Assignments:

Part of your course grade is based on class participation. Students are to read the assigned texts **prior** to their discussion in class, and come to class prepared to discuss the readings. Many classes will focus on discussing a thought experiment related to the theme of the material for that week. Students who are **not willing** to read all the assigned materials or contribute to public discussion should **not** take the class. Everyone benefits from robust classroom discussion.

To further facilitate discussion and to ensure that students are reading the assigned materials, the instructor will periodically assign written homework. Homework assignments can **only be turned in on the day that they are due**.

There will be **two exams**, which will consist primarily of short-answer and essay questions. A study guide will be circulated prior to each exam. Exams **cannot be made up** if missed.

This course is aimed at helping students learn to write better; in particular, it aims at giving the students the skills needed to write a good argumentative paper. Students will write **three papers** for the course. The first two papers will involve summarizing the central argument(s) of a philosophical text. The final paper will be an argumentative paper of approximately twelve pages. The topic can be any issue in metaphysics related to the course material, but must be approved beforehand by the instructor. Further details on the papers will be forthcoming.

All papers will be docked 1 full letter grade for *each* 24 hour period late (or part thereof), excluding official University holidays.

Course Grade:

Class Participation and Homework	15%
Exam I	15%
Exam II	15%
Summary Paper I	10%
Summary Paper II	10%
<u>Argumentative Paper</u>	<u>35%</u>
TOTAL	100%

Grading Scale:

A	> 93%
A-	90-93%
B+	88-90%
B	83-88%
B-	80-83%
C+	78-80%
C	73-78%
C-	70-73%
D+	68-70%
D	63-68%
D-	60-63%
F	< 60%

Academic honesty:

This is, after all, a course concerned with truth. Academic dishonesty in any form (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) will **not** be tolerated. The University of San Diego's policy on academic honest reads, in part, as follows:

Academic dishonesty, and allegations of academic dishonesty, are matters of University-wide concern in the same way that academic integrity is a matter of University-wide concern. Students bear the responsibility not only for their own academic integrity but also for bringing instances of suspected academic dishonesty to the attention of the proper authorities.... Penalties imposed by the instructor or supervisor with respect to a course or academic exercise may include: reduction in grade of the affected person in the course or exercise; the requirement that the affected person withdraw from the course or exercise; the requirement that all or part of the course or exercise be retaken; the requirement that the person engage in additional work in connection with the course or exercise.

Cheating on an assignment, such as plagiarizing a paper or consulting previous semester's exams, is grounds for failure of the course. I **will not hesitate** to fail you if you cheat.

Miscellaneous Information:

All students must utilize their USD email accounts, as I will sometimes use email to communicate with the class. Thus, I expect you to check your email on a reasonable basis. If you normally use a different email address, you will need to set your USD account to automatically forward all received mail to your preferred account.

Students are expected to treat all others in the class with the respect that is due. This included making sure that your **cell-phones are turned off** during class time. Also, **no laptops** will be allowed in the course without prior approval of the instructor.

You should become familiar with my web-page, as it has links to E-Reserve and WebCT. Also note that email is probably the best way to communicate with me outside of class.

Rough Course Schedule (Subject to Change):

The current class schedule of readings and assignments can be found on WebCT. Make sure you check this **regularly** and **often**.

<u>Date:</u>	<u>Topic to be Discussed:</u>
3 September	Introduction to the Course; Syllabus; Knobe Effect in-class
5 September	Lowe, chapter 1; Vaughn, chapter 1

Change and Persistence

8 September	Ship of Theseus in-class exercise; Vaughn, chapter 2
10 September	Lowe, chapter 2
12 September	Chisholm, "Identity through Time" (ER)
15 September	Change in-class exercise
17 September	Lowe, chapter 3
19 September	Heller, "Temporal Parts of Four Dimensional Objects" (ER)

Composition

22 September	The Statue and the Bronze in-class exercise
24 September	Lowe, chapter 4
26 September	Baker, "The Very Idea of Constitution" (ER)

Necessity and Identity

29 September	Lowe, chapter 5; in-class exercise
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1 October Kripke, *Naming and Necessity* lecture III (**ER**); **Paper I due**
3 October Lowe, chapter 6

Possible Worlds

6 October Lowe, chapter 7
8 October Lewis, "A Philosophers' Paradise" (**ER**)
10 October Plantinga, "Worlds, Books, and Essential Properties" (**ER**)

13 October Review for Midterm
15 October **Midterm Exam**
17 October No Class—Fall Holiday

Philosophical Writing

20 October Vaughn, chapters 3, 7, and 8
22 October Vaughn, chapter 4 and 6
24 October **Paper II due/Make-Up**

Causation

27 October Why Baseballs Don't Exist in-class exercise
29 October Lowe, chapters 9 and 10
31 October Merricks, "Explaining Eliminativism" and "Epiphenomenalism and Eliminativism" (**ER**)

Free Will

3 November Responsibility and Determinism in-class exercise
5 November Lowe, chapter 11
7 November van Inwagen, "How to Think About the Problem of Free Will" (**ER**)

Time and Time-travel

10 November Lowe, chapter 17
12 November McTaggart, "The Unreality of Time" (**ER**)
14 November Prior, "Thank Goodness That's Over" (**ER**)

17 November Time-travel in-class exercise
19 November Lowe, chapter 18
21 November Lewis, "The Paradoxes of Time Travel" (**ER**)

Thanksgiving Week

24 November Library/Make-Up
26 November No Class, Thanksgiving Holiday
28 November No Class, Thanksgiving Holiday

Realism and Anti-Realism

1 December Objects and Mind-Independence in-class exercise
3 December Lowe, chapter 19
5 December Dummett, "Realism" (**ER**)

Final Week

8 December Make-up/New Topic
10 December Make-up/New Topic
12 December Review for Final Exam/**Argumentative Paper Due**

Exam Week

17 December **Final Exam** (2:00-4:00 pm)