

**UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH  
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY**

PHIL 2370: Introduction to Metaphysics

Instructor: K. Dorter

Winter 2014

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Office Hours (MacKinnon 353): Wednesdays and Fridays from 12 to 1, or by appointment, but you can talk to me any time I'm in my office except for the hour before class when I'm preparing. My teaching schedule is in CourseLink and next to my door.

Description: An exploration of major works in five main areas of metaphysics: Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (the ontology of substance), Plotinus' *Enneads* (emanationism), Spinoza's *Ethics* (monism), Hegel's Introduction to the Philosophy of History (dialectical idealism), and Heidegger's *Introduction to Metaphysics* (phenomenological metaphysics).

Readings: **The Philosophy of Aristotle** (ed. Bambrough): **1.** *Metaphysics* I.1,2, *Physics* II.3; **2.** *Metaphysics* VII.3,7,8; **3.** *Metaphysics* XII 6, 7, 9, 10; **4.** *Psychology* III.4,5; *Ethics* X.1,4-8.

**The Essential Plotinus** (trans. O'Brien): **1.** 33-43, **2.** 45-57, **3.** 59-70, **4.** 72-88, **5.** 90-104, **6.** 162-175.

**Spinoza, Ethics** (trans. Shirley), Book 1, Book 2, Book 5.

**Hegel, Introduction to the Philosophy of History**, (trans. Rauch): Chapters One, Two, Three, Four.

**Heidegger, Introduction to Metaphysics** (trans. Fried): Chapters One to Three, Chapter Four: 98-122, 122-221.

Assignments: In addition to the final exam (50%) you may write **either** two 1250 word essays (25% each) **or** one 2500 word essay (50%). 1250 or 2500 words are minimum lengths – **essays may be longer if justified by the content**. You can also use the first 1250 word essay as a trial run for the 2500 word essay, or you can expunge the grade for your first essay by submitting a 2500 word essay later – in both cases resubmit the original essay along with the final version. If you want preliminary feedback submit something by the first deadline. **Submit on paper** – electronic submissions will not be accepted. See the Essay Guidelines for due dates.

Final Exam: (April 7 from 11:30 to 13:30) The final exam will consist of **essay questions** about the works covered in class (selected from a list handed out at the final class).

Essay topics: I've made seven major texts on metaphysics available for your essays (check with me if you want to work on something else):

Lucretius: *On the Nature of Things* (CourseLink)

Leibniz: *Discourse on Metaphysics, Monadology, On the Ultimate Origin of Things* (CourseLink) **Read all three**

Kant: *Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics*\* (CourseLink)

Fichte: *The Vocation of Man* (CourseLink)

Schopenhauer: *The World as Will & Representation*, Vol. 1\* (3-day Library Reserve) †

Russell: *The Problems of Philosophy* (CourseLink)

Whitehead: *Adventures of Ideas*\* (3-day Library Reserve)

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\* The texts marked with an asterisk are especially difficult.

† Read the following sections: §§1, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 15, 17-22, 26-7, 30, 33, 34, 36, 38, 54, 57, 63, 65-6, 68 (except 384-91), and 71.

Also available as *The World as Will and Idea*: <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/38427>.

Or: *The Philosophy of Schopenhauer*, pp. 3-335 (B 3108.E3).

Or: *Schopenhauer Selections*, pp. 1-380 (B3108.P3 1956).

## **GUIDELINES FOR ESSAYS**

Also see “COA Standard Statements” on Courselink.

1. **Deadlines:** 2500 word essay: Monday, March 17<sup>th</sup>; **or** two 1250 word essays: Monday, February 24<sup>th</sup> and Monday, March 17<sup>th</sup>. **Label your essays** “First Essay”, “Second Essay” or “Long Essay” because short essays and long essays are graded differently. If it’s a rewrite of your first essay hand in your first essay with it so I can see my original comments. If you’d like feedback on an early draft of the 50% essay let me see it by the first deadline. Late essays will be penalized one mark (out of 100) per weekday. The “day” ends at 4:30—if it’s in my mailbox in MacKinnon 343 the next morning I’ll count it as submitted yesterday; if it’s under my door I’ll count it as today. No essay will be accepted after **9 a.m. the morning of the day before** the final exam. **Submit on paper** – electronic submissions will not be accepted, although essays submitted after the end of classes may be sent by email if you don’t mind not getting comments. Students won’t normally be required to answer questions about their essay, but may in some cases. After the last class meeting I’ll email you if any questions arise, so check your email daily since I won’t be able to grade it if I can’t reach you.
2. **Subject:** any text on metaphysics by a philosopher who **isn’t studied in class** (i.e. who isn’t on the list of in-class readings on the reverse). There’s nothing wrong with referring to works studied in class as long as they aren’t the main focus.
3. **Sources:** Focus on **primary texts** (texts of the original author), although secondary sources (works *about* the original author’s texts) may be used as a supplement. **Quotations in a secondary source don’t count as primary texts** because they’re taken out of context. The point is to develop skill in exegesis and evaluation; reporting the results of other people’s exegesis and evaluation doesn’t accomplish this. If little of the subject’s own writings has survived use at least three secondary sources.
4. **Content:** Combine scholarship and creativity, i.e. both attentiveness to the text and a personal response of your own. If you’re interpreting a particularly difficult text it may be enough just to give a clear analysis of it. Where the interpretation is more straightforward your creativity can take the form of considering objections to the author’s views and how the author might reply to them; explain why you think the author can or cannot withstand the criticisms. Also consider possible objections to your own views. The more challenging you make it the better: treating answers as obvious is not worth as much as seeing how they are controversial and difficult.
5. **Format:** The five paragraph model you learned in high school was training wheels to teach discipline. People don’t really write essays like that. Just organize your ideas to be as clear as possible. Use double spaced full sized font (12 point). Also use page numbers. 1250 or 2500 words are minimum lengths—**essays may be longer if justified by the content**.
6. **Style:** Use “I” rather than awkward and outdated circumlocutions like “the author.” And use inclusive language like “humankind” instead of “mankind”, “people ... they” instead of “a person ... he.” Other possibilities: “he or she”, “she or he”, “s/he”, etc.
7. **References:** Give references to all information and ideas taken from someone else, even if they aren’t direct quotations. Otherwise it may be plagiarism (when in doubt ask). Listing your sources in a bibliography isn’t enough since it doesn’t show where you make use of them. References should list the **author that you’re citing** first. For example, if you use a book called John Green (editor), *The Philosophy of Lucretius*, and your reference is to something Lucretius wrote, it should say, “Lucretius, Green 12” (**you must give page numbers**), **not** “Green 12”. If you use the latter format I’ll assume you’re citing only a secondary source (what John Green wrote). The bibliography should give the complete title and publication data of the book.

A sample philosophy essay is available on Courselink.