

UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

PHIL 4730-01: Metaphysics/ Fall 2013

Instructor: Jeff Mitscherling MacKinnon 323 jmitsche@uoguelph.ca
Office Hours: Monday & Wednesday 11:30-1:00 and by appointment
Class meets: 10:00-11:20, MacKinnon 119A

Brief Description of Course:

The course is intended as an introduction to metaphysics for advanced students in philosophy. We shall combine an historical approach with a systematic approach. We shall begin with a discussion of the difficulty involved in forming an adequate definition of “metaphysics”. We shall then proceed through selected writings of major ancient and medieval philosophers and theologians, focusing on particular “metaphysical” issues they address and tracing the development of the manners in which these issues are raised and treated. NOTE: While this initial “historical” component of the course may serve as a condensed review of major developments in the history of philosophy, its chief purpose is *not* historical, but thematic: it is intended primarily to provide the student the opportunity to explore at greater depth particular problems and topics that are generally mentioned only in passing (if at all) in historical survey courses. After completing these readings, we shall examine Kant’s critique of this earlier metaphysical tradition, focusing on his seminal treatment of the concepts of God, freedom and immortality, the clarification of which he identified as the defining task of metaphysics proper. Following our reading of Kant, we shall spend the final three weeks of the course analyzing in greater depth particular metaphysical issues that the members of the class have found especially interesting.

Required Texts:

All readings will be available on CourseLink and/or distributed either electronically or in hard copy by the instructor. Students may have to pay for copies of some of the selected readings, but the cost will be minimal. Further readings, especially from contemporary and current literature, will be recommended to the students throughout the course. If any of these are required, they too will be made available to the students.

Method of Evaluation:

There will be two in-class mid-term examinations and one final examination:

mid-term exam # 1	=	Wednesday 9 October	=	30%
mid-term exam #2	=	Wednesday 6 November	=	30%
final examination	=	(as scheduled by Registrar)	=	40%

The questions for the two mid-term exams will be based on (i) the readings, (ii) the material covered in the lectures, and (iii) in-class discussion.

NOTE WELL: The questions for the final exam will be based largely or exclusively on the material dealt with in the in-class discussions of our final three weeks of classes.

Statements Regarding University Regulations:

E-mail Communication

As per University regulations, all students are required to check their <uoguelph.ca> e-mail account regularly: e-mail is the official route of communication between the university and its students.

When You Cannot Meet a Course Requirement

When you find yourself unable to meet an in-course requirement because of illness or compassionate reasons, please advise the course instructor (or designated person, such as a teaching assistant) in writing, with your name, id#, and e-mail contact. See the Undergraduate Calendar for information on regulations and procedures for Academic Consideration:

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-ac.shtml>

Drop Date

The last date to drop one-semester Fall 2013 courses, without academic penalty, is **Thursday October 31**. For regulations and procedures for Dropping Courses, see the Undergraduate Calendar: <http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-drop.shtml>

Copies of out-of-class assignments

Keep paper and/or other reliable back-up copies of all out-of-class assignments: you may be asked to resubmit work at any time.

Student Rights and Responsibilities

Each student at the University of Guelph has rights which carry commensurate responsibilities that involve, broadly, being a civil and respectful member of the University community. The Rights and Responsibilities are detailed in the Undergraduate Calendar:

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c14/c14-strightsrespon.shtml>

Academic Misconduct

The University of Guelph is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity and enjoins all members of the University community – faculty, staff, and students – to be aware of what constitutes academic misconduct and to do as much as possible to prevent academic offences from occurring. The Academic Misconduct Policy is detailed in the Undergraduate Calendar:

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-amisconduct.shtml>

Recording of Materials

Presentations which are made in relation to course work—including lectures—cannot be recorded in any electronic media without the permission of the presenter, whether the instructor, a classmate or guest lecturer.

Resources

The Undergraduate Calendar is the source of information about the University of Guelph's procedures, policies and regulations which apply to undergraduate programs. It can be found at: <http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/>

If you find yourself in difficulty, contact the undergraduate advisor in your program, or the BA Counselling Office: <http://www.uoguelph.ca/baco/contact.shtml>

Schedule of Class Meetings with Topics and Reading

- Monday 9 September: some possible definitions of “metaphysics”; ancient Greek thought
- Wednesday 11 September: Plato I: universals & particulars, participation, mind-world relation (a)
 Readings: from *Republic* 507b–511e (end of Book VI) & *Parmenides* 126a–135b
- Monday 16 September: Plato II: universals & particulars, participation, mind-world relation (b)
 Readings: from *Republic* 507b–511e (end of Book VI) & *Parmenides* 126a–135b
- Wednesday 18 September: Plato III: God, freedom, soul/mind, cosmology, cosmogony, eschatology
 Readings: from *Republic* 613e–621d (from Book X) [& perhaps *Timaeus* 17a–40b...]
- Monday 23 September: Aristotle I: substance, language-world relation, causality
 Readings: from *Categories* 1-5 & *Physics* II
- Wednesday 25 September: Aristotle II: causality, God, soul/mind
 Readings: from *De Anima* II, *Metaphysics* I
- Monday 30 September: Origen: Early Christian thought on God & soul
 Readings: selections from *Against Celsus* and/or *On First Principles*
- Wednesday 2 October: St Thomas Aquinas: Medieval thought on God & Creation
 Readings: from *Summa Theologica*: the “Five Ways to Prove the Existence of God”
- Monday 7 October: review of ancient & medieval
- Wednesday 9 October: **mid-term examination #1**
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- [Monday 14 October: Thanksgiving - no class]
- Wednesday 16 October: Kant I: the problem with (speculative) metaphysics
 Readings: from *Critique of Pure Reason* Avii–xxii & Bvii–xliv (Prefaces);
 B1/A1–A16/B30 (Introduction)
- Monday 21 October: Kant II: realism & idealism
 Readings: from *Critique of Pure Reason* B1/A1–A16/B30 (Introduction);
 B274–2745 (Refutation of Idealism)
- Wednesday 23 October: Kant III: God, freedom & immortality (a)
 Readings: from *Critique of Pure Reason* A583/B621–A642/B670
- Monday 28 October: Kant IV: God, freedom & immortality (b)
 Readings: from *Critique of Pure Reason* A583/B621–A642/B670 & *Prolegomena* §§40–56
- Wednesday 30 October: Kant V: God, freedom & immortality (c)
 Readings: from *Prolegomena* §§40–56
- Monday 4 November: review of Kant
- Wednesday 6 November: **mid-term examination #2**
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- Monday 11 November: discussion of topics
- Wednesday 13 November: discussion of topics
- Monday 18 November: discussion of topics
- Wednesday 20 November: discussion of topics
- Monday 25 November: discussion of topics
- Wednesday 27 November: discussion of topics
- Thursday 28 November: review & final exam preparation

Final exam to be held as scheduled by the Office of the Registrar.