

Fall 2011
P H I L O S O P H Y 5 2 5
M E T A P H Y S I C S
MW 1730-1845
SH150
schedule #: 22371

Professor: Mark Wheeler
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OFFICE HOURS

Scheduled Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 1500-1720

By Appointment: If you can't make my scheduled office hours, we can arrange another time to meet.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The objective of this course is to consider carefully some of the fundamental issues in Western metaphysics. The major questions we will consider include: What is metaphysics? What is God, and does God exist? Why is there something rather than nothing? Is everything fated? What is time? What is necessity? Is everything unique? What is a person? Is everything simple, or if not, how can one thing be constituted out of many parts?

CLASS PARTICIPATION

I will take attendance at the beginning of each class session. You can miss three classes during the semester without penalty. For each class session you miss after the third, I will deduct one percentage point from your final grade.

Consistent and informed class participation will improve your final grade by as many as 5 percentage points. I will expect you to raise questions about the assigned readings and to offer your opinions about the material discussed in class. I will routinely ask you questions. I will keep track of the quality of your participation.

REQUIRED TEXTS

You will read all of *Riddles of Existence: A Guided Tour of Metaphysics* (Oxford) by Conee and Sider. I encourage you to read some part of one of the following major contributions to Western metaphysics:

Plato, *Sophist*
Aristotle, *Metaphysics*
Plotinus, *The Enneads*
Aquinas, *On Being and Essence*
Descartes, *Meditations, Objections, and Replies*
Spinoza, *Ethics*
Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*
Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics and Other Essays*
Kant, *Prolegomenon to Any Future Metaphysics*
Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*
Heidegger, *Being and Time*
Whitehead, *Process and Reality*

I also recommend reading some of the texts suggested by Conee and Sider in the “Further Reading” sections in their text, each of which is a major contribution to the contemporary debate in Western metaphysics.

GRADED WORK

You must write four short papers and one research paper. Each short paper is worth 15% of your final grade. The research paper is worth 40% of the final grade.

You must follow strictly both the general and specific guidelines for the papers. If you violate any of the guidelines, then the following will happen:

1. I will return your paper to you without a grade.
2. You will correct the paper so that it meets the guidelines, and to do this, you will have no more than two days from the day I return the paper to you.
3. I will grade the corrected paper, but the highest possible grade the corrected paper can receive is a B. If the corrected paper fails yet again to meet the guidelines, you will receive a failing grade on the paper.

General Guidelines for All Papers:

- a. The paper must have a title page with your name or red i.d. on it.
- b. The paper must be type-written on standard letter-size (8 ½” x 11”) paper.
- c. You must use a font *no larger than* 12 point.
- d. The paper must be double spaced.
- e. The pages of the paper must be either stapled or clipped together.
- f. You must number all of the pages except for the title page.
- g. There must be fewer than 3 misspellings.
- h. There must be fewer than 5 grammatical mistakes (not including misspellings).
- i. The paper must be handed in on time.
- j. You must use the MLA style.

Specific Guidelines for the Short Papers:

- A. Each paper must focus on one of the assigned topics for the class.
- B. *If you are an undergraduate student, for each paper you must do the following:*
 1. You must locate an argument in one of the chapters in the required textbook that you find interesting and that you think might serve as a topic for your paper. No two papers may focus on topics from the same chapter.
 2. You must meet with me outside of class to discuss the argument you find interesting. I may not approve your chosen argument as a topic for your paper, so I advise you to have more than one argument as possible topics.
 3. In writing your paper, you must do the following:
 - a. State in your own words the argument you find interesting. This means that you must explicitly state the conclusion of the argument and the premises presented in support of that conclusion.
 - b. State why it is interesting or important to consider the argument.
 - c. Provide reasons for thinking that the argument is unsound. This means that you must state explicit reasons for thinking that one of the premises in the argument is false.
 - d. Briefly explain how someone might avoid the objection you raised.
 - e. You must write your paper in the first person singular.
 4. Each paper must be no shorter than 3 FULL pages in length, not including the title page or the bibliographical pages.

I ACCEPT ROUGH DRAFTS UP TO ONE WEEK BEFORE PAPERS ARE DUE.

C. *If you are a graduate student, you must do the following:*

1. You must locate an argument in a text other than the required textbook that (a) relates to a topic in one of the chapters in the required textbook, (b) that you find interesting, and (c) that you think might serve as a topic for your paper. No two papers may focus on topics related to the same chapter.
2. You must meet with me outside of class to discuss the argument you find interesting. I may not approve your chosen argument as a topic for your paper, so I advise you to have more than one argument as possible topics.
3. In writing your paper, you must do the following:
 - a. State in your own words the argument you find interesting. This means that you must explicitly state the conclusion of the argument and the premises presented in support of that conclusion.
 - b. State why it is interesting or important to consider the argument.
 - c. Provide reasons for thinking that the argument is unsound. This means that you must state explicit reasons for thinking that one of the premises in the argument is false.
 - d. Briefly explain how someone might avoid the objection you raised.
 - e. You must write your paper in the first person singular.

I ACCEPT ROUGH DRAFTS UP TO ONE WEEK BEFORE PAPERS ARE DUE.

Specific Guidelines for the Research Papers:

- a. You must undertake a bibliographical search in the SDSU library and find one journal article or book that has a topic central to the assigned text as its main focus.
- b. You must talk to me about the article or book you have found.
- c. As part of the paper, you must explain the main argument of the article or book you have found. This means that you must state the main conclusion of the article and the evidence presented in support of that conclusion.
- d. The main purpose of the paper is to analyze and critically respond to some argument in the article or book you have found. This means that you must state explicitly the conclusion of that argument, the evidence presented in support of that conclusion, and you must criticize explicitly the argument as follows:
 1. Provide reasons for thinking that the argument is unsound.
 2. Explain how someone might respond to your objection.

I ACCEPT ROUGH DRAFTS UP TO ONE WEEK BEFORE PAPERS ARE DUE.

Course of Study and Due Dates for Papers:

Aug 29	First day of class. Introductory material.
31	What is Metaphysics?
Sept 7	What is Metaphysics?
12	God
14	God
19	God
21	God
26	Nihilism
28	Nihilism and First paper due.
Oct 3	Necessity
5	Necessity
10	Necessity
12	Necessity
17	Fatalism
19	Fatalism and Second paper due.
24	Freedom
26	Freedom
31	Freedom
Nov 2	Freedom
7	Time
9	Time and Third paper due.
14	Universals
16	Universals
21	Constitution
23	Constitution
28	Constitution
30	Constitution
Dec 5	Persons
7	Persons and Fourth paper due.
16	Research paper due.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

If any of you have special needs related to the assignments, class sessions and/or graded work, please see me after class or during my office hours to discuss the matter. You should see me about such matters as soon as possible. You can rely on my complete confidentiality with regard to any private conversations.

LEARNING DISABILITIES:

In general, if you think something might prevent you from doing well in this course, you should talk with me as soon as possible so that proper arrangements may be made to accommodate your needs. If you have special needs due to a learning disability, please avail yourself of the resources in the Student Disability Services (SDS) located in the Calpulli Center, Suite 3101 (third floor), open M-F 8am-4:30pm, 619-594-6473. The CSU Office of the Chancellor defines a learning disability as

. . . a generic term that refers to the heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning or mathematical abilities. These disorders occur in persons of average to very superior intelligence and are presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction. Even though a learning disability may exist concomitantly with other handicapping conditions (e.g., sensory impairments) or environmental influences (e.g., cultural/language difficulties), it is not the direct result of these conditions or influences.

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES:

The University Policy File includes the following statement on Absence for Religious Observances:

By the end of the second week of classes, students should notify the instructors of affected courses of planned absences for religious observances. Instructors shall reasonably accommodate students who notify them in advance of planned absences for religious observances.

California Education Code 89320 states:

The Trustees of the California State University shall require that each state university, in administering any test or examination, to permit any student who is eligible to undergo the test or examination to do so, without penalty, at a time when that activity would not violate the student's religious creed.

Please notify me if you plan to be absent for religious observance.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY AND PLAGIARISM:

(The following definitions of, and SDSU policy on, academic dishonesty are copied from the University Policy File, page 18. I ask that you read this carefully. I also recommend that you visit the website (<http://www.sa.sdsu.edu/srr/index.html>) for the SDSU Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities for more information about your rights and responsibilities:)

Cheating and Plagiarism

1.0 Institutions of higher education are founded to impart knowledge, seek truth, and encourage one's development for the good of society. University students shall thus be intellectually and morally obliged to pursue their course of studies with honesty and integrity.

Therefore, in preparing and submitting materials for academic courses and in taking examinations, a student shall not yield to cheating or plagiarism, which not only violate academic standards but also make the offender liable to penalties explicit in Title 5 of the California Code of Regulations, part 5, sec. 41301(a), as follows:

41301. Expulsion, Suspension and Probation of Students. Following procedures consonant with due process established pursuant to Section 41304, any student of a campus may be expelled, suspended, placed on probation or given a lesser sanction for one or more of the following causes that must be campus related:

(a) Cheating or plagiarism in connection with an academic program at a campus. A student who has committed either offense may be subject to university disciplinary action.

2.0 Definitions

2.1 Cheating shall be defined as the act of obtaining or attempting to obtain credit for academic work by the use of dishonest, deceptive, or fraudulent means. Examples of cheating include, but are not limited to (a) copying, in part or in whole, from another's test or other examination; (b) discussing answers or ideas relating to the answers on a test or other examination without the permission of the instructor; (c) obtaining copies of a test, an examination, or other course material without the permission of the instructor; (d) using notes, cheat sheets, or other devices considered inappropriate under the prescribed testing condition; (e) collaborating with another or others in work to be presented without the permission of the instructor; (f) falsifying records, laboratory work, or other course data; (g) submitting work previously presented in another course, if contrary to the rules of the course; (h) altering or interfering with the grading procedures; (i) plagiarizing, as defined; and (j) knowingly and intentionally assisting another student in any of the above.

2.2 Plagiarism shall be defined as the act of incorporating ideas, words, or specific substance of another, whether purchased, borrowed, or otherwise obtained, and submitting same to the university as one's own work to fulfill academic requirements without giving credit to the appropriate source. Plagiarism shall include but not be limited to (a) submitting work, either in part or in whole, completed by another; (b) omitting footnotes for ideas, statements, facts, or conclusions that belong to another; (c) omitting quotation marks when quoting directly from another, whether it be a paragraph, sentence, or part thereof; (d) close and lengthy paraphrasing of the writings of another; (e) submitting another person's artistic works, such as musical compositions, photographs, paintings, drawings, or sculptures; and (f) submitting as one's own work papers purchased from research companies.

3.0 Academic and Punitive Sanctions: Cheating and plagiarism in connection with the academic program at the university may warrant two separate and distinct courses of disciplinary action that may be applied concurrently in response to a violation of this policy: (a) academic sanctions, such as grade modifications; and (b) punitive sanctions, such as probation, suspension, or expulsion. Academic sanctions are concerned with the student's grades and are the responsibility of the instructor involved. Punitive sanctions are concerned with the student's records and status on campus and shall be the responsibility of the university President or designated representative. The Coordinator of Judiciary Procedures shall be the President's representative in matters of student discipline.

4.0 Due Process in Review of Alleged Violations

4.1 Punitive Sanctions: Only the university President or designated representative shall be authorized to exercise punitive authority over students and in so doing shall be mandated to accord students all the elements of "due process." The steps set forth in CSU Executive Order 970, "Student Conduct Procedures of The California State University," shall be followed in the delineation of these matters.

4.2 Academic Sanctions

4.21 The instructor involved shall be expected to determine the type of academic sanction for cheating or plagiarism. Usually, “grade modification” shall be used; however, grade modification shall not be considered punishment and shall be used only if the instructor is satisfied that cheating or plagiarism did occur. The grade modification shall be left to the discretion of the instructor. Grade modification may include (a) a zero or F on the paper, project, or examination, (b) a reduction in one letter grade (e.g., C to D in the course), or (c) an F in the course. In addition to grade modification, certain departments or schools may have policies that state that cheating can show unsuitability for the program or profession. Students should be made aware of the penalties for cheating and of their appeal rights.

4.22 Furthermore, before applying grade modification, the instructor should advise the student of the alleged violation and should have reasonable evidence to sustain that allegation. Reasonable evidence, such as documentary evidence or personal observation or both, shall be necessary for the allegation to be upheld.

4.3 When a student is accused of cheating or plagiarism, the instructor should arrange an informal office conference with the student and at that time advise the student of the allegation as well as the evidence supporting it. The purpose of the office conference shall be to bring together the persons involved to discuss the situation informally and to decide upon an appropriate solution. If more than one student is involved in the incident, the instructor may call the students together to confer as a group if the students so desire. All notes and discussions between the student and instructor shall be confidential, except as may be relevant in subsequent campus disciplinary proceedings or subsequent legal action.

5.0 Disciplinary Record: In order to coordinate information so as to permit appropriate disciplinary action for first-time and repeat offenders, instructors shall contact the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities (<http://csrr.sdsu.edu/>) to obtain reporting requirements. Instructors should describe violations of this policy according to the requirements stated in EO 969 (<http://www.calstate.edu/eo/EO-969.html>).