

GENERAL COURSE INFORMATION

Course Title: Phil 537 Philosophy of Science

Section Info: Schedule # 22676, TuTh 12:30-1:45, Room M-207

Instructor: Thomas Weston

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Office Hrs: 3 - 4 Tu Th + by Appt

SUBJECT OF COURSE:

This course is about the philosophy of natural science. Examples will be drawn mainly from physics and biology, but students are not expected to know this material in advance. We will study answers that have been given to some of the questions mentioned below, mainly by Anglo-American philosophy. This philosophical tradition is heavily influenced by empiricist epistemology, so many of the debates we will discuss are between pro- or anti-empiricist positions. The questions: what is a scientific theory, how is it structured, which kinds of tests are theories subject to, are theories ever known to be true or probably true and according to what conception of truth?

READING MATERIALS:

Our readings will be available on Blackboard and also in print form at Cal Copy, inside KB Books, across College Ave by the footbridge. It will be useful to have a copy of Boyd, Gasper, and Trout, *The Philosophy of Science*, MIT Press. You may get a used copy from Amazon or other online seller.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: (all must be completed for a passing grade)

- 1) Two one-hour midterm exams, essay form, count 20% each.
- 2) A paper of 2000-2500 words. Instructor will give suggested topics and detailed instructions, after the first exam is returned. First draft will be due late in the semester. Final draft is due at end of finals week. Counts 20%.
- 3) Comprehensive final examination, questions available in advance, essay form. Counts 35%.
- 4) Short quizzes on the assigned reading. Count 5%.

Please note: the paper is not optional, but is a requirement for this course. Regular attendance, reading of assignments on time, and participation in class discussion is expected. In addition to the printed text, the instructor will post Powerpoint slides for most lectures, as well as study questions, sample exam answers and revised due dates and assignment lists.

ASSIGNMENTS

A tentative list of assignments and dates for exams will be available on the second week of class

Accommodation for Disabilities

The instructor will be happy to meet with any student who may need support services due to a disability. He will cooperate with DSS in providing authorized accommodations or support services for students.