

14 Introduction to Philosophy: Metaphysics

Christian Wüthrich

Winter 2009

Class schedule: TuTh 2:00-3:20pm, Solis 104
Sections: A01: M 3-3:50pm, HSS 2154 (TA tba)
A02: M 4-4:50pm, HSS 2154 (TA tba)
A03: F 8-8:50am, HSS 2154 (TA tba)
A04: F 9-9:50pm, HSS 2154 (TA tba)
Website: <http://philosophy.ucsd.edu/faculty/wuthrich/>
Contact: Office hours are Th 3:30-5:00pm and by appointment
Room 8047 HSS ☎ 858-534-6548 ✉ wuthrich@ucsd.edu
TA: Nate Rockwood (Office hours: Th 12-2pm, 8089 HSS)
✉ nrockwoo@ucsd.edu

This course is an introductory survey of some of the chief problems in metaphysics. It is topic-oriented rather than history-oriented. This emphasis means we will often consider problems independently of their historical context. Hopefully, what is lost by way of historical grounding will be balanced by a gain in interest in the issues themselves. Due to time constraints, the course must also focus on a limited subset of philosophical problems. We will spend most of our time on what are arguably the really big problems of philosophical metaphysics: God, the Mind-Body Problem, Causation, Time, Personal Identity, and Free Will.

Along with serving as an introduction to some philosophical puzzles, the course also hopes to develop and foster good argumentative skills and critical thinking on the part of the student. Combined with the fact that philosophical texts are frequently difficult for beginning students, this makes the course relatively challenging for an introductory course. But for those with a speculative turn of mind, it should be fun.

Course materials

The lecture is primarily intended to set the scene and provide the stimulus for your own studies. You should do at least the required reading for every topic as preparation for the class in which you will discuss the material in depth. I hope that you will be interested enough to follow up some of the recommended reading on at least some of the topics—this will more than repay the effort. I have also posted some relevant podcasts on the course website and hope that you will find them stimulating food for thought.

Most of the mandatory reading material is electronic, accessible through reserves.ucsd.edu. This method will save you a lot of money and also give you better readings. You will find a direct link to this course's readings from the course website.

I have also ordered the very readable *Riddles of Existence: A Guided Tour of Metaphysics* by Earl Conee and Theodore Sider (CS). It's available at Groundwork Books in the Student Center (0323 New Student Center) for a reasonable price (around \$14).

Apart from the small textbook, you will also need to purchase a transmitter for the **InterWrite PRS RF System**, the student response system used in this class. These transmitters, informally called “clickers,” are available at the Price Center bookstore and cost \$46.70 (new) or \$35.05 (used). You may be able to use the same clicker in other classes, particularly in science classes. Make sure to get a new clicker operating at radio frequency and not an old infrared one or an “iClicker”. For more information, visit <http://clickers.ucsd.edu/>.

Course requirements and evaluation

Attendance in class and sections is required. Since every class will contain some material not found in the readings, it is nearly impossible to do well in this course if one’s attendance is anything short of regular. The final grade for this course will be determined by the total points a student earns from the five types of evaluation indicated below. Expect a **D-** for a total of 60 points, a **C-** for a total of 70 points, a **B-** for a total of 80 points, and an **A-** for a total of 90 points. This scale may be adjusted according to the point distribution in the class. If you take the class for a Pass/Fail grade, you must have at least a **C-** in order to pass the class.

1. *Attendance* (for rounding): Attendance in class sections will be taken and used as a way of deciding borderline cases.
2. *Participation* (20 points): Your “clicker” score will be based on in-class questions scored using the InterWrite PRS RF student response system. During each class (except the first), I will ask you to “buzz in” and the system will automatically record your responses, and then transmit it to me. Perhaps twice or so during classes, I will put up a short quiz or poll for you to answer. For participating in these small quizzes and polls, you will receive one point per class meeting if you click in each time I prompt you to, half a point for responding to some of the prompts during this class and none if you never click in. Your clicker score will be the percentage of points earned divided by the maximum possible. **Important: you must have your clicker every class period to get these points—no exceptions.**
3. *Short paper* (20 points) [turnitin.com]: You are expected to write one short essay of roughly 5 pages due on **5 February 2009** at the end of class. I shall hand out a list of paper topics fairly early in the course. For each day your paper is late, five points will be deducted from your point total, although no negative point totals will be given for the midterm papers.
4. *Midterm exam* (25 points): There will be a **midterm exam** in class on 17 February 2009. You are not allowed to use any books or notes or the like, i.e. the exam is “closed-books”.
5. *Final exam* (35 points): There will be a **final exam** on TBA. You are not allowed to use any books or notes or the like, i.e. the exam is “closed-books”. The final exam is cumulative, i.e. it covers all the material of the entire course.

The midterm paper must be submitted *both as hard copies as well as through turnitin.com by their due dates* in order to earn credit. You must enroll at turnitin.com by creating a new profile. You will need the following course information:

Class ID: 2459432

Enrollment Password: phil14wi09

If you have any problems with using turnitin.com, you can contact the Instructional Web Development Center of Academic Computing Services at 858-822-3315 or iwdc@ucsd.edu.

The fine print

In your short paper, all sources, including discussions with classmates, must be appropriately acknowledged. *All answers given must be in your own wording.* Closely paraphrasing or simply copying the work of others (such as authors of books or articles, or classmates) is not allowed and will be severely penalized. You must ask me in case you are uncertain whether something constitutes plagiarism. Plagiarism, the stealing of an idea or actual text, and other forms of academic dishonesty will be immediately reported to the Academic Integrity Office.

Students agree that by taking this course all required papers will be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to the terms of use agreement posted on the Turnitin.com site.

You must observe the University's Policy on Integrity of Scholarship, which can be found at <http://www-senate.ucsd.edu/manual/appendices/app2.htm>.

Make-up exams (for midterm and final) will only be given under the most severe circumstances. The student who wishes to write a make-up exam must inform me (by phone or email) ahead of the time of when the exam is due (midterms) or takes place (final). In order to qualify for a make-up exam, appropriate evidence of the most severe circumstances must be produced by the student. I will determine, in consultation with the student, what qualifies as appropriate evidence.

Tentative schedule of classes

You should complete all the assigned readings before the corresponding class meeting. My presentations slides are available online as PDF files. Additional background material on all topics will also be available on the course website. I gratefully acknowledge Craig Callender's generosity in sharing all class materials.

Date	Topic and Mandatory Readings
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6 Jan	Introduction: Philosophical Arguments and God's Existence CS: 62-70
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8 Jan	Deductive Arguments for God's Existence: Cosmological and Ontological CS: 78-84, 87-101 Rowe, W., "The Ontological Argument" (e-reserves)
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Date	Topic and Mandatory Readings
13 Jan	Inductive Arguments for God's Existence: Design and Anthropic CS: 70-78 Paley, W., "The Argument From Design", selection from <i>Natural Theology</i> (e-reserves) Hume, D., <i>Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion</i> , parts 5 and 7 (e-reserves)
15 Jan	The Problem of Evil Mackie, J.L., "Evil and Omnipotence" (e-reserves) Hick, J., <i>Philosophy of Religion</i> , 1983 ³ , 40-49 (e-reserves)
20 Jan	Mind-Body Problem Descartes, R., "Sixth Meditation" (e-reserves) Taylor, R., <i>Metaphysics</i> , Excerpts from Ch. 2 and 3 (e-reserves)
22 Jan	Mind-Body Problem Churchland, P., <i>Matter and Consciousness</i> , Ch. 2, pp. 7-50. (e-reserves)
27 Jan	The Mind-Body Problem: Can Computers Think? Searle, J., "Can computers think?" (e-reserves) Churchland, P.M., and P.S. Churchland, "Could a machine think?" (e-reserves)
29 Jan	Causation: What Holds the Universe Together? Hume, D., <i>An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding</i> , Sec. 5 and 7 (e-reserves)
3 Feb	Causation: Do We See It? Ducasse, C.J., "On the Nature and Observability of the Causal Relation" (e-reserves) Beebe, H., "Seeing Causing", read only pp. 257-267 (e-reserves)
5 Feb	Causation and Laws: Humean and Non-Humean Views of the World Short paper due Beebe, H., "The Non-Governing Conception of Laws of Nature" (e-reserves)
10 Feb	Time: Is the World Four-Dimensional? Callender, C., <i>Introducing Time</i> , excerpt (e-reserves) Gamow, G., "The World of Four Dimensions" (e-reserves)
12 Feb	Time: Does it Flow? CS: 44-61 Dainton, B., <i>Time and Space</i> , excerpt (e-reserves)
17 Feb	Midterm exam in class (bring blue books)
19 Feb	Time: Is Time Travel Possible? Hunter, J., "Time travel", available at http://www.iep.utm.edu/t/timetrav.htm
24 Feb	Personal Identity CS: 7-22 Dennett, D., "The Origins of Selves", http://ase.tufts.edu/cogstud/papers/originss.htm
26 Feb	Personal Identity and Time Velleman, J.D., "So it Goes" (e-reserves)
3 Mar	Fatalism CS: 22-43
5 Mar	Free Will CS: 112-133
10 Mar	Free Will Frankfurt, H.G., "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility" (e-reserves) Chisholm, R., "Human Freedom and the Self" (e-reserves)
12 Mar	Free Will Nagel, T., "Freedom" (e-reserves) Final exam , time and date TBA (bring blue books)