

Sample Syllabus: Metaphysics

Instructor

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I am also available by appointment. Please give me at least 24 hours' notice.

Course Description

This is a course in metaphysics, the systematic study of the nature of reality. Metaphysics can be distinguished from other areas of inquiry by its generality and abstractness. Chemistry, for instance, is the study of what chemicals there are, as well as what they're like and how they're related. By contrast, metaphysics is the study of what *things* or *entities* there are (in the broadest possible sense), as well as what they're like and how they're related (again, in the broadest possible sense). We will cover a number of topics, including causation, freedom and determinism, personal identity, the mind, time, material objects, and properties. Finally, we will close with a look into metametaphysics, the study of metaphysical inquiry itself (e.g. its methodology, whether its disputes are verbal, etc.), and feminist metaphysics, which investigates the metaphysics of social kinds and offers feminist critiques of mainstream metaphysics.

Required Text

Our main textbook, *An Introduction to Metaphysics* by John W. Carroll and Ned Markosian (C&M), is required and can be purchased online. Other readings will be posted online, including:

“Introduction: A Guided Tour of Metametaphysics” by David Manley, in
Metametaphysics

“On the Apparent Antagonism Between Feminist and Mainstream Metaphysics” by Mari
Mikkola

Objects: Nothing Out of the Ordinary (Ch. 1-3) by Dan Korman

Course Requirements

Here is the grading breakdown with tentative due dates:

Lecture participation – 5% – Register and use your iClicker

Section participation – 5% – See your TA for details

Weekly homework – 10% (1% each) – Due Tuesdays

Paper 1 (800-1200 words) – 25% – Due Tuesday (2/4) of Week 5

Paper 2 (800-1200 words) – 25% – Due Tuesday (3/3) of Week 9

Final Exam (cumulative) – 30% – Tuesday (3/17) of Finals Week from 4 to 7 pm

Paper Assignments

Each paper will consist of a defense or critique of an argument/theory we covered in class. You will (a) explain and motivate the argument/theory, (b) advance an objection, and (c) address some possible responses. Your thesis should concern whether the argument/theory is ultimately successful or unsuccessful in light of the objection. Late papers lose 1/3 letter grade per day.

Weekly Homework

Each week, you will write up a short analysis of an argument/theory covered that week. This will consist of a brief summary of the argument/theory as well one objection to it. This should be no more than half a page, and it will receive either full credit (for completion), half credit, or zero credit.

Schedule

We will try, as far as possible, to keep to the following tentative schedule:

<u>Week</u>	<u>Readings</u>	<u>Topics</u>	<u>Papers and Exams</u>
1	C&M: Ch. 1	Introduction to Metaphysics	
2	C&M: Ch. 2	Causation	
3	C&M: Ch. 3	Freedom and Determinism	Paper 1 Assigned
4	C&M: Ch. 5	Personal Identity	
5	C&M: Ch. 6	Mind	Paper 1 Due (2/4)
6	C&M: Ch. 7	Time	
7	Korman: Ch. 1-3	Material Objects	Paper 2 Assigned
8	C&M: Ch. 9	Properties	
9	Manley	Metametaphysics	Paper 2 Due (3/3)
10	Mikkola	Feminist Metaphysics	
			Final Exam on Tuesday (3/17) from 4-7 pm

Disability Policy

If you need accommodations, please speak to me in advance and make arrangements with Disabled Students Services (DSP) at <http://dsp.sa.ucsb.edu>.

Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty, such as plagiarizing, will be severely punished. For more info on what constitutes academic dishonesty, see judicialaffairs.sa.ucsb.edu/AcademicIntegrity.aspx.

Final Note

Please feel free to bring any concerns about the course to my attention. This syllabus is liable to change, and you are responsible for any changes given adequate notice. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed.