



**UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY**  
FACULTY OF ARTS  
Department of Philosophy

**PHIL 523.9**  
**Advanced Topics in Metaphysics (Natural Kinds)**  
Winter 2021

**COURSE OUTLINE**

**Instructor Name:** Marc Ereshefsky

**Email:** [ereshefs@ucalgary.ca](mailto:ereshefs@ucalgary.ca), please insert “Phil 523” in the subject heading of all email messages concerning this course.

**Office Hours:** Tuesdays 2 – 3:15. These will be conducted via Zoom. You can find the link to that Zoom meeting in the Class Zoom Information document in the Content Folder of D2L.

**Instructor Name:** C. Kenneth Waters

**Email:** [ckwaters@ucalgary.ca](mailto:ckwaters@ucalgary.ca), please insert “Phil 523” in the subject heading of all email messages concerning this course.

**Office Hours:** Wednesdays 2 – 3:15. These will be conducted via Zoom. You can find the link to that Zoom meeting in the Class Zoom Information document in the Content Folder of D2L.

**COURSE DELIVERY INFORMATION**

Synchronous, Thursdays 4 – 6:45 pm

These will be conducted via Zoom. You can find the link to that Zoom meeting in the Class Zoom Information document in the Content Folder of D2L

**PREREQUISITE(S)**

6 units in courses labelled Philosophy, of which, 3 units must be from Philosophy 201, 395, 421, 423, 461, 463, 467, 481, 483 and 3 units must be at the 400 level or above.

**COURSE INFORMATION**

We often categorize entities into kinds in our daily lives. Science is also in the business of sorting entities into kinds through the practice of scientific classification. In fact, we often look to science to identify fundamental kinds in the natural world. The common assumption among philosophers is that natural kinds are objective in the sense that they are independent of human actions, thoughts, and purposes. Nevertheless, the question *what is a natural kind?*, is far from settled and has been a central question in metaphysics since ancient times. In the first part of this course, we will examine how philosophers in the history of philosophy have answered this question. Later in the course, we will look at recent work by philosophers of science that have addressed this question. We will see that many assumptions of the traditional approach to natural kinds –that they are fundamental kinds in the world, that they are independent of human thought– have been questioned. A focus of the course will be how to construct an account of natural kinds where such kinds can be dependent on human thoughts, interests, and purposes.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES/LEARNING OUTCOMES**

- Deep knowledge of one central area of philosophical inquiry;
- Ability to critically digest, interpret, and analyze complex sources;
- Ability to identify and articulate questions for discussion and investigation;
- Ability to engage in constructive philosophical discussion of peers’ ideas;

- Ability to write a convincing argument that takes adequate account of alternative positions;
- Ability to engage in constructive, respectful oral and written argumentation;
- Ability to help peers develop their positions and arguments;
- Ability to use feedback to improve one's own positions and arguments.

### **REQUIRED/RECOMMENDED TEXTBOOKS, READINGS AND MATERIALS**

All required readings will be available for free in electronic form. Weekly readings will include book chapters and journal articles. Full bibliographical information will be available on D2L.

### **COURSE ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION**

**Weekly Reading and Rereading:** Each week, students are required to reread the reading first considered in the previous class meeting and read a new reading selection that will be discussed in the upcoming class.

Note that students are expected to do a reading in preparation for our first seminar meeting on January 14. The instructors will send you an email a week before that meeting with information about the reading.

**Weekly Discussion Questions (200 – 300 words):** Students are required to write and submit a question on the new reading by 1 pm every Thursday. Specific instructions will be available on D2L. Questions should be submitted to the appropriate D2L dropbox.

**Weekly Informal Essays (300 – 400 words):** Students are required to write a brief informal essay addressing a question or theme raised during class each week. The question or theme to be addressed will be posted on D2L by Friday evening. Essays are due at 9 am the following Tuesday morning. Essays will be posted for class members to read and will be discussed during the first part of the upcoming class. Informal essays should be submitted to the appropriate D2L dropbox.

**Papers:** Students are required to write and submit two papers. The papers will be based on class readings and discussions. Students will have the option of visiting an instructor with rough drafts of each paper. The final draft of each paper should be no longer than 1,800 words in length (including footnotes but not references). Student will choose one of two assigned topics for the first paper, and likewise for the second. Papers should be submitted to the appropriate D2L dropbox.

**Style and Citation Requirements:** All written work for this course should adhere to the style, citation, and formatting requirements of the journal *Philosophy of Science*. Those requirements can be found at <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/journals/phos/instruct>

**Participation:** Students are required to present their discussion questions and ideas from their informal essays. More generally, the success of the seminar strongly depends on class discussion. Every student should participate in class discussion. This does not mean that you need to enter the discussion at every class meeting. Students should contribute in at least half of our class meetings. The more voices heard in class, the better the discussion. You may feel like you have nothing to contribute, but even pointing out that you are confused about something in the reading or discussion is a contribution.

This seminar will succeed only if everyone feels like they belong and are free to ask questions and participate in discussions. This will require the mindfulness of each of us. So please be respectful, positive, and constructive in your participation in the course.

**Completion Requirement:** Students must complete at least 6 discussion questions, 6 informal essays, and both papers to pass the course.

Assignment	Due date	Points
11 Discussion questions	1 pm on Thursdays	20 points (2 points each, lowest score dropped)
11 Informal essays	9 am on Tuesdays	20 points (2 points each, lowest score dropped)
Paper 1	5 pm March 5	25 points
Paper 2	5 pm April 23	30 points
Participation		5 points

Assignments turned in late: If an assignment is turned in late without an appropriate excuse it will receive a grade of zero, but it nevertheless can count towards fulfilling the Completion Requirement stated above.

No registrar scheduled final will be given.

Final grades will be determined as follows

96-100 = A+	75-79 = B	55-59 = C-
90-95 = A	70-74 = B-	50-54 = D+
85-89 = A-	65-69 = C+	45-49 = D
80-84 = B+	60-64 = C	below 45 = F

**IMPORTANT DEPARTMENTAL, FACULTY AND UNIVERSITY INFORMATION**

**Academic Accommodations**

It is the student's responsibility to request academic accommodations according to the University policies and procedures. The student accommodation policy can be found at [ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy.pdf](http://ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy.pdf).

Students needing an Accommodation because of a disability or medical condition should communicate this need to Student Accessibility Services in accordance with the Procedure for Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: [ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/procedure-for-accommodations-for-students-with-disabilities.pdf](http://ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/procedure-for-accommodations-for-students-with-disabilities.pdf). Students needing an Accommodation in relation to their coursework or to fulfil requirements for a graduate degree, based on a protected ground other than disability, should communicate this need, preferably in writing, to their instructor.

**Absence or Missed Course Assessments**

Students who are absent from class assessments (tests, participation activities, or other assignments) should inform their instructors as soon as possible. If the reason provided for the absence is acceptable, instructors may decide that any arrangements made can take forms other than make-up tests or assignments. For example, the weight of a missed grade may be added to another assignment or test.

**Student Support and Resources**

Full details and information about the following resources can be found at [ucalgary.ca/Registrar/registration/course-outlines](http://ucalgary.ca/Registrar/registration/course-outlines)

- Wellness and Mental Health Resources
- Student Success Centre
- Student Ombuds Office
- Student Union (SU) Information
- Graduate Students' Association (GSA) Information
- Emergency Evacuation/Assembly Points
- Safewalk

### **Academic Advising**

If you are a student in the Faculty of Arts, you can speak to an academic advisor in the Arts Students' Centre about course planning, course selection, registration, program progression and more. Visit the Faculty of Arts website at [arts.ucalgary.ca/advising](https://arts.ucalgary.ca/advising) for contact details and information regarding common academic concerns.

For questions specific to the philosophy program, please visit [phil.ucalgary.ca](https://phil.ucalgary.ca). Further academic guidance is available by contacting David Dick (Undergraduate Program Director [dgdick@ucalgary.ca](mailto:dgdick@ucalgary.ca)) or Jeremy Fantl (Honours Advisor [jfantl@ucalgary.ca](mailto:jfantl@ucalgary.ca)). If you have questions regarding registration, please email Rebecca Lesser (Undergraduate Program Administrator [phildept@ucalgary.ca](mailto:phildept@ucalgary.ca)).

### **Writing Assessment and Support**

The assessment of all written assignments—and, to a lesser extent, written exam responses—is based in part on writing skills. This includes correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc.), as well as general clarity and organization. Research papers must include a thorough and accurate citation of sources. Students are also encouraged to use Writing Support Services for assistance. For more information, and other services offered by the Student Success Centre, please visit [ucalgary.ca/ssc](https://ucalgary.ca/ssc).

### **Required Technology**

In order to successfully engage in their learning experiences at the University of Calgary, students taking online, remote and blended courses are required to have reliable access to the following technology:

- A computer with a supported operating system, as well as the latest security, and malware updates;
- A current and updated web browser;
- Webcam (built-in or external);
- Microphone and speaker (built-in or external), or headset with microphone;
- Current antivirus and/or firewall software enabled;
- Broadband internet connection.

Most current laptops will have a built-in webcam, speaker and microphone.

### **Responsible Use of D2L**

Important information and communication about this course will be posted on D2L (Desire2Learn), UCalgary's online learning management system. Visit [ucalgary.service-now.com/it](https://ucalgary.service-now.com/it) for how-to information and technical assistance.

All users of D2L are bound by the guidelines on the responsible use of D2L posted here:

<https://elearn.ucalgary.ca/commitment-to-the-responsible-use-of-d2l/>. The instructor may establish additional specific course policies for D2L, Zoom, and any other technologies used to support remote learning. Instructional materials, including audio or video recordings of lectures, may not be posted outside of the course D2L site. Students violating this policy are subject to discipline under the [University of Calgary's Non-Academic Misconduct policy](#).

### **Media Recording**

Please refer to the following statement on media recording of students: [https://elearn.ucalgary.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Media-Recording-in-Learning-Environments-OSP\\_FINAL.pdf](https://elearn.ucalgary.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Media-Recording-in-Learning-Environments-OSP_FINAL.pdf)

**Academic Misconduct/Honesty**

Cheating or plagiarism on any assignment or examination is as an extremely serious academic offense, the penalty for which will be an F on the assignment or an F in the course, and possibly a disciplinary sanction such as probation, suspension, or expulsion. For information on academic misconduct and its consequences, please see the University of Calgary Calendar at [ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html](http://ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html).

Intellectual honesty requires that your work include adequate referencing to sources. Plagiarism occurs when you do not acknowledge or correctly reference your sources. If you have questions about referencing, please consult your instructor.

**University Policies**

The Instructor Intellectual Property Policy is available at [ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/Intellectual%20Property%20Policy.pdf](http://ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/Intellectual%20Property%20Policy.pdf)

The University of Calgary is under the jurisdiction of the provincial Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act, as outlined at [ucalgary.ca/legalservices/foip](http://ucalgary.ca/legalservices/foip). The instructor (or TA) must return graded assignments *directly* to the student UNLESS written permission to do otherwise has been provided.

All students are required to read the University of Calgary policy on Acceptable Use of Material Protected by Copyright ([ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/acceptable-use-of-material-protected-by-copyright-policy.pdf](http://ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/acceptable-use-of-material-protected-by-copyright-policy.pdf)) and requirements of the copyright act ([laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/index.html](http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/index.html)).