

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Philosophy 589.62
“Advanced Topics in Philosophy: Laws of Nature”
Fall 2008

Course Outline

Instructor: Noa Latham
Office: SS 1250
Phone: 403-220-5528
Email: latham@ucalgary.ca
Office Hours: M 12-1, F11-12 and by appt.

Lectures: MW 2.00-3.15, SS 1253

Course Description

Topics to be discussed: What a law of nature is, how they are to be distinguished from accidental regularities, whether there are any laws. The relation between laws and induction, causation, counterfactuals, explanation, and the direction of time. Whether there are fundamental laws and how they relate to ceteris paribus laws and special science laws. Whether laws are necessary and if so what kind of necessity. Whether laws are relations between universals. The relation between laws and the individuation of properties and natural kinds.

Course Texts

Readings will be drawn primarily from contemporary texts and will be made available on Blackboard, either scanned or by way of a link to a journal accessible through the library.

Course Requirements

- Four short papers (roughly 1000 words each) assigned in class Sep 17, Oct 1, Oct 15, Nov 5 and due the following Saturday night by email. Your best three of these assignments will be worth 10% each of the course grade.
- A term paper (roughly 5000 words). Proposal due Nov 19, to be discussed with me on Nov 21. Final paper due December 5 and worth 60% of the final grade.
- A class presentation (approximately 10 minutes) worth 5% of the course grade in the week Nov 24-26.
- Class participation worth 5%.

Cumulative and final grades will be computed by Gradebook on the Blackboard site using the following scale: A+=100, A=96, A-=92, ... D=60, F=56.

Late papers will be marked down by one grade step (e.g. from B to B-) for each day of lateness. (The time between Fri and Mon counts as one day.) If you are anticipating any difficulty in turning your assignment in on time you must discuss the problem with me before the due date.

Course Website

A course website has been set up on U of C's Blackboard server. You should be automatically signed up if you're registered in the class. Log in with your UCS user ID and password. You can find the website at <http://blackboard.ucalgary.ca/>. I shall be using Blackboard to post readings, assignments, grades, to confirm what we are reading for the next class, and to provide some questions on those readings.

INTELLECTUAL HONESTY

Intellectual honesty is the cornerstone of the development and acquisition of knowledge and requires that the contribution of others be acknowledged. As a result, cheating or plagiarism on any assignment or examination is regarded as an extremely serious academic offence, the penalty for which may be an F on the assignment and possibly also an F in the course, academic probation, or requirement to withdraw. The University Calendar states that plagiarism exists when:

- *the work submitted or presented was done, in whole or in part, by an individual other than the one submitting or presenting the work (this includes having another impersonate the student or otherwise substituting the work of another for one's own in an examination or test);*
- *parts of the work are taken from another source without reference to the original author;*
- *the whole work (e.g., an essay) is copied from another source; and/or*
- *a student submits or presents work in one course which has also been submitted in another course (although it may be completely original with that student) without the knowledge of or prior agreement of the instructor involved.*

While it is recognized that scholarly work often involves reference to the ideas, data and conclusions of other scholars, intellectual honesty requires that such references be explicitly and clearly noted. Plagiarism is an extremely serious offence. Plagiarism occurs not only when direct quotations are taken from a source without specific acknowledgement, but also when original ideas or data from the source are not acknowledged. A bibliography is insufficient to establish which portions of the student's work are taken from external sources; footnotes or other recognized forms of citation must be used for this purpose.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION

It is the student's responsibility to request academic accommodation. If you are a student with a documented disability who may require academic accommodation and have not registered with the Disability Resource Centre, please contact their office at 220-8237. Students who have not registered with the Disability Resource Centre are not eligible for formal academic accommodation. You are also required to discuss your needs with your instructor no later than fourteen (14) days after the start of this course.

STUDENTS' UNION REPRESENTATIVE

The Humanities Representative is Daniel Pagan, MSC 251, humanitiesrep@su.ucalgary.ca or 220-3913.