



UNIVERSITY OF
CALGARY

FACULTY OF ARTS
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

PHIL 623.6 Lec 01
Topics in Metaphysics (Scientific Metaphysics)
Fall Term 2017

Tuesdays 12:30-3:15 pm in SS 1253

Course Outline

Instructor: Marc Ereshefsky
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Course Description

Many philosophers believe that metaphysics should be informed by science, and this is usually taken to mean that metaphysics should be informed by the theoretical results of fundamental physics. We will pursue a different approach to scientific metaphysics, one that seeks to inform metaphysics by the nature of successful practices across the sciences. These include practices of theorizing, but also practices of experimentation and manipulation, and practices of classification and individuation. The seminar will be organized into three parts. The first part will cover different accounts of how metaphysics could be informed by science. These readings will provide a common basis for graduate students to develop research projects about how metaphysics might be informed by the results or practices of science. The contents of the rest of the seminar will be set by graduate student research projects. Students will identify their own topic areas in the first part of the seminar. In the second part, students will select readings in their topic areas for the class to read and discuss as they are developing and pursuing their individual research projects. In the third part of the course, students will write research papers, drafts of which will be read and discussed by the class.

Course Learning Outcomes

- Deep knowledge of one central area of philosophical inquiry;
- Ability to critically read, 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 help peers develop their positions, arguments, and writing;
- Ability to use discussions and feedback about one's work to improve one's own positions, arguments, and writing;
- Ability to engage in constructive, respectful, oral and written argumentation.

Course Work

Written Preparations for Gateway and Topic Area Readings

Students are required to write and submit a question at the beginning of each class each week. You should develop a question for each reading that could provide a basis for class discussion. Your written prep should have four parts.

- (1) A general description of the reading that puts your question into the context of the reading.
- (2) A single sentence statement of your question (this should be a sentence that ends with a question mark).
- (3) An exposition of your question that restates your question in a clear way and does some (or all) of the following:
 - identifies pages, passages, or arguments in the reading selection in which your question arises;
 - explains in the context of the reading why your question arises (e.g. “in this passage author claims *X* but this other passage seems to imply *not X*”);
 - provides ideas about how one might try to answer the question;
 - offers possible answers to the question.(The aim of the exposition section of your preparation is to develop your question in a way that will elicit an informative discussion and possibly lead to a paper topic.)
- (4) An explanation of why your question is important.

Please organize your presentation into four parts labeled as follows:

1. Background on reading selection relevant to the question.
2. One sentence statement of the question.
3. Exposition of the question.
4. Why this question is important.

Your written preparation should be 200 – 300 words in length.

Your question may be remedial; for example it might ask for a clarification of an important claim, concept, or argument in the reading that you do not understand. Or your question could be more critical in nature, alluding to a weakness in the reading. Or your question could be probing, identifying an issue that is raised by the reading or a possible implication of the reading. Identifying and developing good research questions is possibly the most important and challenging part of doing philosophy. Some questions are more researchable than others. Your weekly task is to develop questions that will provide a basis for engaging seminar discussions and possibly a starting point for fruitful philosophical investigation.

Remarks on using quotations: you may find using quotations helpful, but please do not use quotations to do your explaining for you. If you quote a passage, you should restate the idea in your own words. If you quote, you must follow the style guidelines specified in the course outline. Please do not paraphrase. Either quote strictly following the conventions or write in your own words. If you have any questions concerning quotation or paraphrasing, please see an instructor.

Written Preparations on Drafts of Students' Papers

Special instructions will be given for this assignment.

Topic Area Identification Report

Students are required to submit a report of the topic area they plan to research and to write a paper on for this seminar. You should both describe the topic and explain why it would be a promising topic area to work on. This part of your report should be approximately 500 words in length. On a separate page of your report, provide a bibliography of at least three sources. For each source, add a sentence or two explaining why it is a good source for the topic.

In the middle section of the course, we will discuss readings suggested by students with an eye towards helping students conduct research in their chosen topic areas. After your bibliography section in the Topic Area Identification Report, you should identify two possible reading selections that you would like your classmates to read and discuss. Your selection should be of a length equivalent to a standard article (20 – 25 pages). If your selection is from a longer piece, you may specify about 20 – 25 self-contained pages for students to read. If you select a portion or portions of a longer work, your selections should be described *very* carefully (by lines) so there is no ambiguity about which lines of which pages you intend to assign. The instructors will choose which of your two selections will be assigned to the class.

Research Proposal

Students are required to submit a research proposal of approximately 2,000 words (not including references) that presents their research plan. Your proposal should identify your research question or problem, explain why it is important, and explain how you intend to address it. You should organize your proposal in two parts. The first part should explain and motivate the focus of your research by answering these questions: (i) What is the general topic area? (ii) What are the main views on the topic? (iii) What question or problem in this topic area will be the focus of your attention? The second part of the proposal should contain a section-by-section outline of how you plan to construct your research paper. Dedicate a paragraph describing each section of the proposed paper. This outline will serve as your research plan. It is just a tentative plan. At least 1,200 words should be devoted to the first part of the proposal. Your proposal must include references.

Research Paper

The word maximum is 5,000 words (including footnotes, excluding references and any diagram notation). It should be written in a style appropriate for submission to the CPA Conference or PSA Biennial Meeting. You are required to submit a rough draft as well as a final draft.

Introductory Presentation for a Gateway Reading

The aim of presentations is to stimulate subsequent discussion, not to provide a summary of the contents of the reading. You should draw attention to what you think are the most provocative ideas, lines of reasoning, and arguments in the selection. Your presentation should motivate questions that we can discuss. You should conclude your presentation with two questions.

Introductory Presentation for a Topic Area Reading

The aim of presentations is to explain the significance of the reading for your project and stimulate subsequent discussion, not to provide a summary of the contents of the reading. You should draw attention to what you think are the most provocative ideas, lines of reasoning, and arguments in the selection relevant to your research problem.

Two Research Talk Reports

Students are required to attend and report on two Philosophy Department research talks. These talks will be announced in class and posted on the Philosophy Department website. Research talk reports should be 200 – 300 words in length and organized into three labeled parts: a. report of the research presentation; b. report of the discussion during the question and answer period after the main presentation; and c. your reaction to the research presentation and discussion, and what you they learned from them.

Due Dates and Grading

Important: there is a required reading and written preparation assignment due at the beginning of the first class (September 12). The reading assignment for the first class is presented below (an aftersheet form for this assignment will be emailed to enrolled students at least one week before class):

Background reading (no written prep question about this reading):

Bryant, Amanda (2017) "What's Metaphysics All About?", *Philosophy for Our Times*, online 15 August 2017: <https://iainews.iai.tv/articles/what-is-metaphysics-all-about-auid-870?access=ALL>

Primary reading (your written prep question should be a question about this reading):

Bryant, Amanda (2017) Keep the chickens cooped: the epistemic inadequacy of free range metaphysics, *Synthese*, published online, 8 April 2017: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11229-017-1398-8>

The background reading is available for free; it is published open-access. The primary reading can be obtained for free to the University of Calgary community by navigating via library.ucalgary.ca or for charge by going directly to the link above.

Assignment	Due date	Points
12 written preparations	Beginning of each class	Required, but no point value
Topic Identification Report	Oct 6	10 points
Research Proposal	Oct 27	30 points
Rough Draft Research Paper	Nov 14	Required, but no point value
Final Research Paper	Dec 15	60 points
Intro to Gate Reading	To be assigned	Required, but no point value
Intro to Topic Area Reading	To be assigned	Required, but no point value
2 Research Talk Reports	Oct 24 Nov 28	Required, but no point value

These are due dates for research talk reports, but students are encouraged to submit their reports earlier.

No late assignments will be accepted without an appropriate excuse. Individuals might receive one-week postponements for topic identification, research proposal assignments, or rough draft assignments.

No registrar scheduled final will be given.

All of the above assignments are required for passing the course.

Final grades will be awarded 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

Readings

Readings will be available on-line. There are no printed texts to purchase for this course.

Course Schedule

The first four classes (September 12, 19, 26 & October 3) will be devoted to reading and discussing Gateway Readings on metaphysics and scientific metaphysics. The second four classes (October 17, 24, 31 & November 7) will be devoted to discussing student-selected Topic Areas readings. The final two classes (November 21 & 28) will be devoted to discussing drafts of student research papers.

Style and Citation Requirements

All written work for this course should be submitted as hard copies and adhere to the formatting requirements of the journal *Philosophy of Science* with three exceptions:

1. Please staple an aftersheet with your name on everything you turn in. Your name should not appear anywhere else on the assignment (so we can follow the best practice of masked grading when possible).
2. Include page numbers at the bottom of each page of any multipage submission (except for the aftersheet, which does not need to be numbered).
3. You do not need to include an abstract for any assignment other than the rough and final drafts of the papers.

The formatting requirements of *Philosophy of Science* can be found at:

<http://journal.philsci.org/formatting-guidelines>

IMPORTANT DEPARTMENTAL, FACULTY AND UNIVERSITY INFORMATION

Academic Honesty

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, an F in the course, academic probation, or requirement to withdraw from the University. See the relevant sections on 'Academic Misconduct' in the current University Calendar. 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 correct referencing, consult your instructor.

Academic Accommodation

The student accommodation policy can be found at: ucalgary.ca/access/accommodations/policy.

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/student-accommodation-policy.

Students needing an Accommodation based on a Protected Ground other than Disability, should communicate this need, preferably in writing, to their instructor.

D2L Help

Desire2Learn is UCalgary's online learning management system. Important information and communications about this course may be posted on D2L. Go to <https://ucalgary.service-now.com/it> for help.

Protection of Privacy

The University of Calgary is under the jurisdiction of the provincial Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act. The Department of Philosophy ensures the student's right to privacy by requiring all graded assignments be returned to the student directly from the instructor or teaching assistant.

Internet and Electronic Communication Devices

The instructor reserves the right to establish course policies regarding the use of devices such as laptops, tablets, and smartbooks. If allowed, these devices must be used exclusively for instructional purposes and must not cause disruption to the instructor or to fellow students. Cell phones and paging devices should be set to silent mode during lectures. Audio or video recording of lectures is not permitted without the written permission of the instructor. Students violating this policy are subject to discipline under the University of Calgary's Non-Academic Misconduct policy

Emergency Evacuation:

In case of an emergency evacuation during class, students must gather at the designated assembly point nearest to the classroom. The list of assembly points is found at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints> . Please check this website and note the nearest assembly point for this course.

Other Helpful Contacts

Safewalk and Campus Security: 403-220-5333.