

## PHIL 14 Introduction to Philosophy: The Nature of Reality

Phil 14 is an introductory survey to some of the chief problems of metaphysics. We'll spend most of our time on what I consider the BIG problems of philosophical metaphysics: God, Causation, Time, Minds, Free Will, and more. 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. Because philosophical texts are frequently difficult for beginning students, the course is relatively challenging for an introductory one. But for those with a speculative turn of mind, it should be fun.

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Casey Mccoy [cdmccoy@ucsd.edu](mailto:cdmccoy@ucsd.edu)  
Office hrs: WF 10-11, HSS 8085

**Where/When:** CENTR 212, TuTh 2-3:20

**Reading** (1) Electronic articles via jstor.org  
(2) *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, Carroll and Markosian

You'll have to purchase (2) online or from a bookstore (note Amazon's two day service for students). You also have the option of [renting](#) (2) electronically for 3 months for approximately \$12. For (1) to work well, you must be vigilant about downloading the material. You can access all material off-campus. Go to <http://libraries.ucsd.edu/services/computing/remote-access/index.html> for directions.

**Lectures** The lecture is primarily intended to set the scene and provide the stimulus for your own studies. I firmly believe that it's my duty to provide *extra content* over and above that found in the readings. 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.

**Sections** Here are five reasons to attend sections: (a) philosophy seeks good

arguments, and the best way to see if you understand is to make some out loud with others, (b) the nitty-gritty of the readings often isn't covered in lecture (no time), but here it can be, (c) the section TA's are skilled experts in the material, (d) grade-able assignments are performed in section, notably the debates (see below), and (e) you have to – attendance will be taken.

## Grading

Final Exam 30%  
 Midterm 25%  
 Essay Outline 5%  
 Essay 20%  
 Debate/Attendance 10%  
 Homework 10%

## Make-ups

There will be no make-up examinations except for serious illness or emergency, as documented by a suitable authority. The student who wishes to write a make-up exam must inform me (by phone or email) ahead of time. Please look now at the dates of the midterm and final and make sure that you put them in your schedule. Late papers and homework will be accepted, but will be penalized a half of a letter grade per day late.

## Integrity

In all your assignments, all sources must be appropriately acknowledged. All answers must be in your own wording. Closely paraphrasing or simply copying the work of others (such as authors of books or articles, or classmates, or Wikipedia) is plagiarism and will be severely penalized. If confused, just ask a TA or me whether something constitute plagiarism. All forms of academic dishonesty will be immediately reported to the Academic Integrity Office. Also, 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.co service is subject to the terms of use agreement posted on the Turnitin.com site. You should read the University's Policy on Integrity of Scholarship at [www.senate.ucsd.edu/manual/appendices/app2.htm](http://www.senate.ucsd.edu/manual/appendices/app2.htm).

The turnitin class ID is 5921739 and password is "metaphysics".

## Respect

Texting, surfing the web, emailing, etc., during lecture/section is not allowed. It's distracting to other students and the lecturer.

## Tentative Schedule of Topics and Readings

### Weeks 1-2      *Does God Exist?*

*We'll use this big question as a way of "warming up" our philosophical chops. We can't cover the topic in full depth, but we'll look at some of the classic arguments for and against in order to get a handle on various philosophical terms and concepts, especially a priori, a posteriori, deductive, inductive.*

- Rowe, William, "[The Cosmological Argument](#)"
- "[Cosmological Argument](#)" *SEP*, sections 3 and 5
- Paley, W. *Natural Theology*, [selections](#)
- Hume, D. *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, [parts 5 and 7](#)
- Sober, "[The Design Argument](#)" (four papers up from bottom; read pages 1-12; 16ff)
- Mackie, "[Evil and Omnipotence](#)" *Mind*, 1955, 200-212

### Weeks 3-4      *What Holds the Universe Together? Causation and Laws of Nature*

*Correlations are everywhere, but only some of these are due to causal relationships. Successful navigation through life requires that we distinguish the two. (Yellow teeth and lung cancer are correlated, but brushing your teeth with a whitener won't help prevent cancer.) We want causation. But what **is** causation? Here we'll look at a few of the main (and very different) contenders and challenges. Also: a goal of science seems to be the discovery of laws of nature. But are there such things, and if so, what are they?*

*Homework: Mueller's Headline Match Game:*

*[http://jfmuelлер.faculty.noctrl.edu/100/correlation\\_or\\_causation.htm](http://jfmuelлер.faculty.noctrl.edu/100/correlation_or_causation.htm)*

- *C&M chapters 2 and 4*
- *Hume, D. 1748. *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, [sections 3 and 5](#),*
- *Hall, "Causation and Science"*
- *Feynman lecturing on laws [video](#)*
- *Armstrong, What is a Law of Nature?*
- *Beebe, H. [The Non-Governing Conception of Laws of](#)*

## Nature

### Week 5

### Minds

*The mind-body problem is the famous question of how your mind (your mental states, experiences, etc) relates to your body (your brain, nervous system, etc). Are they identical? Are they different entities entirely? Or is the relation like that between the software and hardware on a computer?*

- C&M chapter 6
- Block, "[The Mind as the Software of the Brain](#)"
- Descartes tbd

### Week 6

### Personal Identity

*Your parents own a picture of a one year old baby. It's a picture of you, they say. But that creature is very different from you, psychologically and physically. So what makes you **you** over time?*

- CM chapter 5
- Dennett, [Where Am I?](#)
- Locke: "Of Identity and Diversity," [chapter 27](#), *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*,
- Parfit, "Personal Identity", [selections](#) tbd
- Optional: Greg Egan's "[Learning to be Me](#)" (awesome scifi story)

### Week 7

### Free Will and Responsibility

*Given the exact initial conditions of the universe, plus the laws of nature, whether you read the next sentence has been more or less determined. See, you did it! And an ideal predictor could have predicted that at the Big Bang. Does this conflict with your having free will?*

- CM chapter 3
- Ayer, A.J. "[Freedom and Necessity](#)"
- Chisholm, R., "[Human Freedom and the Self](#)"
- Strawson, Galen, "[The Impossibility of Moral Responsibility](#)"

- [BBC Radio show](#)

## Week 8

### Time

*Time is one of the last great mysteries. It strongly seems to us that the present is special, that the future is open, and that time flows in some sense. Science suggests that this is nonsense. How do we respond?*

- *CM chapter 7*
- *Williams, [The Myth of Passage](#)*
- *Huggett, chapters 10, 11 and 14*

## Week 9

### Fatalism and Time Travel

*Forget the threat to freedom from the laws of nature (above). Some philosophers – fatalists -- have argued that from purely logical considerations free will is doomed. We'll examine a version of this argument that says that if the future exists then we have no freedom. Also this week we'll consider the fascinating question of whether time travel is possible.*

- *La jetée (1962), film*
- *Heinlein, ["All You Zombies"](#), scifi*
- *Lewis, [The Paradoxes of Time Travel](#)*

## Week 10

### Space

*If we have time -- the above topics may run over a bit -- we'll tackle space in some way. In particular, depending on interest and available time, we'll do either Zeno's paradoxes, the Leibniz-Newton debate on whether space is a substance, why there are three dimensions, or the alleged conventionality of the shape of space.*

- *tbd*

## Week 11

### FINAL EXAM: 3/21/2013, Thurs 3:00-5:59



## Resources

The *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* is an excellent, peer-reviewed, free online resource. It has multiple entries on every topics we'll consider.

Have you not written a philosophy paper before? Then check out (google):

- Good and Bad in Philosophy Essays—by R. W. Hepburn
- A Guide to Writing Philosophy Essays—by Colin Allen
- A Brief Guide to Writing Philosophy Papers—by Richard Field
- Essay Assignment—by Peter Suber
- Guidelines on Reading Philosophy—by James Pryor
- Philosophical Writing Manual—Short Version—by Martin Young
- Tips on Writing a Philosophy Paper—by Douglas Portmore
- How to Write a Philosophy Paper That Doesn't Suck—Manuel Vargas