

# Phil 130: Metaphysics

---

Professor: Matthew Fulkerson  
email: mfulkerson@ucsd.edu

Office: HSS 8073  
Office Hours: Weds 1-3

---

## Course Description:

This course will examine a number of fundamental philosophical issues in metaphysics, an area of philosophy that seeks to understand the nature and structure of reality. The course will be divided into several self-standing sections. These include sections on personal identity, grounding, constitution and identity, possibility, and metametaphysics. The course is built around the close reading, understanding, and critical evaluation of many difficult texts. We will work together to get through this complex material.

## Required Texts:

All readings will be made available through TED.

## Course Mechanics:

**TED:** There is a TED site for the course. All readings, handouts, slides, and homework assignments will be made available through this site. It is your responsibility to check this site regularly.

**Lectures and discussion:** I sometimes lecture with slides. The slides will be used to focus discussion and to unpack complex material; they are not a substitute for the readings. The slides will be made available on TED a few days after lecture. Students are expected to take careful notes and will be held responsible for the material discussed in class not found on the slides or in the readings. There is no separate time devoted to discussion; please (politely) interrupt at any time with comments or questions.

**Reading Assignments:** Students are expected to read each selection prior to class (preferably more than once). You should take notes while reading, keeping track of questions or issues that arise. You should bring both the reading and the notes/questions to class. Several times per quarter there will be an unannounced group assignment in class, based on the reading.

## Grading:

There are two short essays, a final exam, and a participation/classwork grade:

Assignments	Value	Due Date
Essay 1 (5-6 pgs)	30%	Fri, Feb 6th
Essay 2 (5-6 pgs)	30%	Fri, Mar 13th
Class Work/Participation	10%	?
Final	30%	Fri, Mar 20th

## Course Policies:

**Late Penalties:** To avoid penalties for late assignments, students must provide official documentation explaining why the assignment could not be handed in on time. Late homework without documentation will not be accepted. Late papers without documentation will receive a late penalty of 1/3 letter grade for each day a paper is late, including weekend days (no exceptions).

**Grading Rubric:** All essay grading will be done blind, meaning that you will be asked to put your student number only on each paper. After grading, names will be associated with the numbers for the purposes of assigning grades and checking turnitin (see below). All essay grading is done according to a rubric: 25% for each of **Clarity**, **Argument**, **Accuracy**, and **Originality**.

**Turnitin boilerplate:** 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 (via the TED interface). 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.com service is subject to the terms of use agreement posted on the Turnitin.com site.

## **Tentative Reading Schedule (subject to change):**

### **Week 1-2: Personal Identity**

- Derek Parfit, “Personal Identity”
- Marya Schechtman, “Personhood and Personal Identity”
- Lynne Baker, “Persons and other things”

### **Week 3-4: Grounding (fundamentality)**

*Week 3: No class on January 19th (MLK Day)*

- Jonathan Schaffer, “On What Grounds What”
- Karen Bennett, “Construction Area (no hard hat required)”
- Jessica Wilson, “No work for a theory of grounding”

### **Week 5-6: Constitution and Identity**

- Alan Gibbard, “Contingent Identity”
- Kathrin Kosliski, “Constitution and Similarity”
- L.A. Paul, “The Puzzles of Material Constitution”

### **Week 7-8: Modality**

*Week 7: No class on February 16th, Presidents Day*

- Boris Kment, “The Varieties of Modality”
- David Lewis, “Selection from *On the Plurality of Worlds*”
- Robert Stalnaker, “Possible Worlds”
- Dorothy Edgington, “Two Kinds of Possibility”

### **Week 9-10: Metametaphysics**

- Janice Dowell, “Empirical Metaphysics: the role of intuitions about possible cases in philosophy”
- Craig Callender, “Philosophy of Science and Metaphysics”
- Alyssa Ney, “Neo-Positivist Metaphysics”