

# METAPHYSICS

PHIL 130



**Spring 2017**

**Instructor:** Kerry McKenzie

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**Classes:** SEQUO 147, TuTh 3.30-4.50pm.

**Office:** HSS 8088    **Office Hours:** Tuesdays 5-7pm (or by appointment).

## SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

<i>Wk: Date</i>	<i>Topic</i>
1: 04/03	1. Introduction and Overview (Chapter 1)
1: 04/05	2. Quine's criterion (Chap 2)
2: 04/11	3. Characterizing 'independence' (Chaps 3 & 4)
2: 04/13	4. NO CLASS
3: 04/18	5. Colours (Chap 7 / IEP)
3: 04/20	6. Colours (Chap 7 / IEP)
4: 04/25	7. Moral properties (Chap 8 (omit 8.7.1, 8.10) )
4: 04/27	8. Moral properties (Mackie)
5: 05/02	9. Moral properties (Ayer)
5: 05/04	10. Review
6: 05/09	11. Unobservable entities (Chap 9) <b>Paper due</b>
6: 05/11	12. Unobservable entities (Lyons)
7: 05/16	13. Unobservable entities (van Fraassen)
7: 05/18	14. Numbers (Chap 10 / IEP)
8: 05/23	15. Numbers (Chap 10 / IEP)
8: 05/25	16. Numbers (Collins )
9: 05/30	17. Fundamental objects (Camerson and Bliss)
9: 06/01	18. Fundamental objects (Thomasson)
10: 06/06	19. Review
10: 06/06	20. Review
11: 06/15	Final papers due

# 1 Objectives, methods, requirements

## 1.1 What this course is about

This course concerns a fundamental question of philosophy: *what is real?*. We will approach this question in bite-sized chunks, looking variously at colors, moral properties, unobservable entities, fundamental entities, and numbers. By the end of the course, you should have a grasp of the stock strategies that philosophers use to argue about these topics, and an opinion of your own about a handful of them.

## 1.2 Objectives

On completion of this module students should be able to articulate the notion of realism in philosophy, have an understanding of some of the subtleties involved, and have a view on whether we ought to be realists about two or three types of entity.

## 1.3 Assessment

There are three parts to your assessment.

- Six sets of structured questions, each worth 2%.
- Monday 5th May: argumentative essay of around 1,500 words [ie 1,500 +/- 10%] (35%).
- Thursday June 15th:
  - argumentative essay of around 1,500 words (35%).
  - reflection paper of around 1,000 words (18%).

**Structured questions.** These will consist of a few questions designed to help you develop your view. **Bring hard copies of these to class on specified days** (as I will announce in class). Not being there to hand it in results in a 1 mark penalty. The full 2 marks will be given to each completed assignment you turn in. It is fine (and encouraged) to modify (even if it means scribbling all over) your answer sheet in class.

**Midterm paper.** Your paper should be about 1,500 words long – ie between about 1,350 and 1,650 words – and should be submitted in class on **May 9th**. You will be asked to write an essay discussing **one** of the topics we have looked at thus far (ie colours or moral properties). If you cannot make the deadline for a good reason, you must let me know in advance in order not to incur a penalty. Work received after the deadline and before the weekend will be subject to a grade penalty (so a B+ becomes a B, etc); work received during the following week will be penalized by a further grade penalty. No work will be accepted later than that.

You must submit a hard copy of your paper to me in class as well as submit it through Turnitin, via a link on TED.

**Term papers.** You will be asked to write an essay on a topic distinct from that which was your focus in the term paper. You will also be asked to write a shorter essay reflecting on either (a) the status of a methodological principle used in debates over realism, or (b) how realism about kind  $K$  relates to realism about distinct kind  $K'$ . *Extra credit will be given to work drawing widely from the course as a whole.* These papers must be uploaded to Turnitin by midnight of June 15th to receive a grade.

In class we will discuss the sort of thing I'm looking for you in your term papers and exam essays. But in a nutshell I will be looking for three things, weighted roughly equally:

**Comprehension:** understanding of the concepts and ideas discussed in the essay.

**Clarity:** presentation of the ideas and concepts in a clear and concise manner.

**Engagement:** independent thinking about the items under discussion. *For an A-grade mark, you must go a step beyond the material explicitly covered in class.*

**Grading scale.** Your TAs will be assigning letter grades for your exam and term paper corresponding to these marks:

$97 - 100 = A^+$	$87 - 89 = B^+$	$77 - 79 = C^+$	$67 - 69 = D^+$
$93 - 96 = A$	$83 - 86 = B$	$73 - 76 = C$	$60 - 66 = D$
$90 - 92 = A^-$	$80 - 82 = B^-$	$70 - 72 = C^-$	$< 60 = F$

The final letter grade you receive however will be 'graded to the curve', so that the top 20-25% of students will get a grade in the A range, the next 25-35% a grade in the B range, the next 25-30% a grade in the C range, and the remaining 5-25% a D or an F. This is the minimum I guarantee; if the class has worked well and no-one deserves a D or an F, the curve will be adjusted accordingly.

### **Academic Integrity.**

UCSD is committed to academic integrity. According to their *Policy on Integrity of Scholarship*,<sup>1</sup>

"Integrity of scholarship is essential for an academic community. The University expects that both faculty and students will honor this principle and in so doing protect the validity of University intellectual work. For students, this means that all academic work will be done by the individual to whom it is assigned, without unauthorized aid of any kind."

If you are unsure in any way of what acting with integrity demands of you in this context, I'll be happy to discuss it with you.

**Set reading.** Our coursebook will be *Realism and Anti-Realism* by Stuart Brock and Edwin Mares. (We will be omitting chapters 5 & 6, and 11 & 12.) The book is difficult – in some places, unnecessarily so – and is by no means perfect. Thus DO NOT HESITATE to raise in class anything in the reading that was unclear to you: it will be helpful for me too,

<sup>1</sup>For the full statement, go to <https://students.ucsd.edu/academics/academic-integrity/policy.html>

and probably everyone else as well. I will also be distributing additional compulsory and optional reading on TED as we go along.

You are encouraged to use the *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* to find additional reading on whatever topic it is that you have chosen to write about. In some cases, the (more advanced) *Stanford Encyclopedia* will be useful too: I will advise you on that in class. Do not hesitate to get in touch for any advice on reading.

**Office hours.** I run office hours Tuesday 5-7pm in H& SS 8088. Please look at office hour as another resource available to you. If that time does not suit your schedule, don't hesitate to get in touch to try and arrange a time that does.