

PHIL 2580 – Fall 2020, University of Manitoba

Meeting Times: MWF 1:30-2:20 p.m.

Instructor: Damian Melamedoff-Vosters

Email: damian.melamedoff@umanitoba.ca

Course Description:

We often disagree about which things are real. Kids think Santa Claus is real, but we know he's not. Some people think that God is real, others do not. But what do we *mean* when we say that something is real? What is it for something to *be*? These are the foundational questions of metaphysics. In this class, we will dive deep into these questions. We will look at philosophers who have theories of what it is for something to be real, as well as philosophers who think that the word "real" is a meaningless inheritance from pre-scientific thinking. Following this, we will look at some classic debates about what reality consists in. Does reality include numbers, features, and other such abstractions? Can reality *change*? Can things really *persist* over time?

As this is a philosophy class, extra focus will be given to the rigorous reconstruction and evaluation of arguments.

Course Materials

The required readings will be a series of papers provided through the course website.

Course Evaluation

<i>Item</i>	<i>Value</i>	<i>Due</i>
Argument Reconstruction	20%	Oct 16
Short Paper 1	40%	Nov 13
Short Paper 2	40%	Dec 11

The argument reconstruction is a short essay (500-1000 words), where you take a passage (which will be provided to you), reconstruct it into standard form, and briefly discuss which premise of the argument you think might be challenged. The goal of this assignment is to prepare you for the short papers. These papers will be evaluated on the clarity and accuracy of the reconstruction.

The short paper is a slightly longer paper (1000-2000 words), where you take a passage (which will be provided to you), reconstruct it into standard form, identify a premise to challenge, construct an argument in standard form whose conclusion is the denial of the identified premise, defend each premise in your argument, and consider an objection to your own argument.

Late Assignments

Late papers will be deducted a third of a letter grade (from B+ to B, from B- to C+) per day late.

Accessibility Services

Over and above the issues related to assignments or tests, you may require the assistance of Accessibility Services for other course-related reasons. Please get in touch with them as soon as possible so that we can ensure that you make the best out of your learning experience.

Wheaton's Law

Don't be a jerk. A large part of a philosophy class involves arguing with people who disagree with you. The fact that this is an important part of our activity does not warrant anyone in engaging in any of the following behaviours: speaking out of turn, cutting people off in conversation, dominating discussion, talking down to or making fun of someone, or any other jerky behaviour. Other ways of being disrespectful and distracting to the class include: showing up late, having your cellphone go off, being on Facebook on your computer, and having side conversations with the person sitting next to you.

Email and Office Hours

All emails related to the class should have 'Metaphysics' in the subject line.

My office hours are by email appointment, and I am free most times outside of class to meet. If I haven't responded within 48 hours, please feel free to email me again: this will not bother me, you have a right to having your emails answered. Email is not the place for deep philosophical discussion, so I will only discuss substantive philosophical questions in person during office hours.