PHIL 3650/7160: Seminar in Metaphysics

Winter 2021

Instructor: Adam Murray
Office: Thursdays, 3:30–4:30 p.m., or by appointment; online
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Meetings: Wednesdays, 2:30–4:45ish; online

1 Course Description

This is a seminar in contemporary metaphysics. Its aim is to introduce you to some important and influential work done in metaphysics over the past 50 years or so. We’ll look at classic papers in metaphysics, and at some of the secondary literature those papers have inspired. We’ll also spend some time talking about the aims, methodology, and subject-matter of metaphysics, and about historical and contemporary scepticism as to whether metaphysics is worth doing at all.

As a student in this course, you may expect to gain a broad understanding of some core topics in contemporary metaphysics. You’ll also gain some of the technical tools you need to read, write, and think about a variety of metaphysical topics.

2 Readings

We’ll primarily be reading papers/book chapters. Everything will be made available to you online. Plan to carefully read around two articles a week.

3 Evaluation

Final grades will be determined as follows:

- 3 short papers (25% each; due the weeks of Feb. 22, March 22, and April 19)
- Attendance and participation (25%)

Paper requirements/expectations will differ for undergraduate and graduate students. We’ll discuss the papers and ways to effectively participate during our first meeting.
4 Additional Course Information

4.1 Zoom

Naturally, everything will happen online (on Zoom). Links to all meetings and office hours will be sent by email. It is important to check your inbox regularly for the most up to date meeting information. Please make every effort to arrive on time.

4.2 Contact

In addition to our seminar meetings, I will hold a set of weekly office hours on Thursdays, from 3–4 p.m.. Please feel free to attend these should you wish to speak with me on matters pertaining to the course, or to ask any questions. Keep in mind that my office hours are an excellent time to discuss any material that you find interesting and/or challenging: as a student in the course, you should feel most welcome to drop into my office during this period if you’d like to chat about anything course-related. Outside of class and office hours, the absolute best way to reach me is by email. However, please note that email is an inappropriate format for asking substantive philosophical questions about the course material. Those sorts of questions are encouraged, but you should bring them to our seminar, or to my office hours, in order that we may discuss the issues properly.

4.3 Style and Formatting

Your submitted work should conform to a standard formatting and citation style, such as MLA, APA, or Chicago. Please submit all work in .pdf format.

4.4 Deadlines and Late Work

Your assigned work for this course must be submitted on time. If you foresee any difficulty submitting your work on time, speak to me before—not after!—the deadline. In all likelihood, we will be able to work something out.

4.5 Academic Honesty

As you are undoubtedly aware, using someone else’s ideas without explicit acknowledgement is stealing, and constitutes plagiarism. It is your responsibility to understand the nature of plagiarism, and what to do to avoid it in your writing. For more information on academic infractions at the University of Manitoba, and how to avoid them, see here. Note that the common penalty in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences for plagiarism in a written assignment, test, or examination is F on the piece of work. For the most serious acts of plagiarism, such as the purchase of an assignment or cheating on a test or examination, the penalty can also include suspension for a period of up to five years from registration in courses taught in a particular department or from all courses taught in this Faculty. If you are ever in any doubt about plagiarism, and other related academic offenses, it is always best to simply speak to your instructor about whatever issues are causing the problem. I encourage you to speak with me if you have any concerns about academic integrity, either in this course or in other courses you are taking.

4.6 Accessibility accommodations

Should you require any accessibility-related accommodations in this course due to a disability, please do not hesitate to communicate this fact to me either in person or by email. Click here to learn more about accessibility-related resources available to students at the U of M.