

PHIL 100E: METAPHYSICS

University of California, Santa Barbara | Summer 2009 (Session B)

I. CONTACT INFO

LECTURE INFORMATION

Time: TWR 9:30am–10:50am

Location: BREN 1414

Web / Twitter page:

http://twitter.com/may_class

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Joshua May

Office: South Hall, room 5720

Email: jdmay@umail.ucsb.edu

Website: www.uweb.ucsb.edu/~jdmay/

Office Hours: Tues. 2-4pm

TEACHING ASSISTANT (TA)

Timothy Linehan (email: timothylinehan@umail.ucsb.edu)

Office hours: Thurs. 12:30p – 2:30p (Location: SH 5432-P)

DISCUSSION SECTIONS

<u>Day</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Building</u>	<u>Room #</u>
Mondays	9:30a-10:50a	387 (by PSYCH)	103
Thursdays	11:00a-12:20p	HSSB	1232

Map of UCSB: <http://www.aw.id.ucsb.edu/maps/ucsbmap.html>

II. BASIC COURSE INFO

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is an introduction to several core topics in contemporary analytic *metaphysics* (roughly, the study of the fundamental nature of reality). The topics we'll likely cover (and the main questions associated with them) are:

1. Universals & Existence: There are lots of particular things that are, say, male. But is there something over and above all these instances, like the property (or "universal") of being male? Need we posit such things, or can we explain all that we need to without doing so?
2. Modality (Necessity, Possibility): Hilary Clinton might have been elected president in 2008. What is the nature of this "modal" fact? Is it, say, because there is another so-called "possible world" in which she was so elected?
3. Causation: What is it for one thing or event to cause another? Is there a necessary connection between the cause and its effect? Did the effect *have to* follow the cause? Or is Hume right that there is really only a constant succession of one event following another and an *expectation* on our part that the effect will always follow the cause?
4. Time (& a bit of Space): What is time exactly? Is it even real? Is it an objective sort of thing? Are *tensed* notions like the present essential to time? Or can (and should) time be accurately characterized without them, e.g. in tenseless, four-dimensional *space-time*?
5. Persistence: How do things persist through time? Does, say, the whole thing persist through time or is it merely a series of "time-slices" of that thing?

The material covered in the course will include selections from important contemporary philosophers (primarily from the last 100 years).

PREREQUISITES

Required: one prior course in philosophy.

Recommended: More than that, preferably including PHIL 3 or 183 (or equivalent logic course).

REQUIRED TEXTS

(1) *Metaphysics: Contemporary Readings*, 2nd edition, edited by Michael J. Loux (Routledge, 2008). ISBN 10: 0415962382, ISBN-13: 978-0415962384
(Note: a copy of the text is on reserve in the library for those interested.)

(2) Additional readings (if there are any) will be provided on E-reserves (ERes):

<http://eres.library.ucsb.edu/eres/>

COURSE TWITTER PAGE

There is a Twitter page for this class (http://twitter.com/may_class). It will serve as the course webpage. You can either simply view the Twitter page or you can use a Twitter account to "following" it. Twitter will be our way of sending out important updates about the class, especially time-sensitive ones, as well as post documents, such as the syllabus. So, if I become sick, for example, and have to cancel a lecture, you can receive a text message from Twitter (if you enable this feature) that will let you know you don't have to come to section that day. Pretty cool!

COURSE FORMAT

We will be discussing material primarily from the text and possibly supplemental readings. However, we **may not cover everything in the assigned reading**, and quite often **material will be brought up in lecture that is not in the readings**. So it is crucial that you come to class (and section).

LECTURE HANDOUTS

I will be providing handouts in lecture, and these will be available on the course web page at some point afterward (e.g. at the end of the week). This should help those to catch up who miss class for legitimate reasons. But beware; **the handouts are only guides with limited amounts of information**. You are expected to take notes in lecture and section to supplement them. I am providing the handouts in part so that you don't have to spend much of lecture writing down everything I say. The handouts should allow you to listen and participate in class more.

III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Attendance	(in section)	5% of grade	(your section day)	[weekly]
2. Mid-Term	(in class)	20% of grade	(Date: Thrs. 8/20)	[3 rd week]
3. Term Paper	(5-7 pages)	35% of grade	(Due: Thrs. 9/3)	[5 th week]
4. Final Exam	(in class)	40% of grade	(Date: Thrs. 9/10)	[6 th week]

Note: These due dates are pretty firm, but they are subject to minor changes. Also, the final exam will *probably not* be cumulative; but I haven't decided yet.

ATTENDANCE

Students are expected to attend all class meetings (lectures and sections). Attendance will *not* be tracked in lecture, but even just a few absences will likely adversely affect your performance on assignments. In discussion section, however, your **TA will take attendance**. There will be approximately **6 meetings** of your section throughout the quarter. You will receive *full credit* for attendance so long as you attend 4 out of 6; you will receive *half credit* if you attend 3 out of 6; if you fail to attend at least 3 meetings, you will receive *no credit* for this assignment. (Note: You **do not need to notify your TA** if you're going to be absent.) It's up to your TA whether to count tardiness as an absence.

Summer Warning: In summer session, everything happens very quickly. You must learn a great deal of material in a very short span of time. Don't miss class or you will fall irretrievably behind.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS

There will be **no rescheduled exams**. Furthermore, there is a late policy for turning in late papers as follows: You will receive **1/3 of a letter grade** lower for each day (not class meeting) you are late, including each day on the weekend. (So, for example, if you turn in a paper a day late and you would get an "A," then you will receive an "A-" for the paper.

However, of course, if you have special circumstances, exceptions may be made. But you must let me know **as soon as such special circumstances arise**; otherwise I may not be able to work something out with you.

GRADES

You should be here primarily to **learn**, not to get a grade. Expect to be graded on your observable intellectual performance, not on the basis of *effort* or *need*.

But **don't fret** too much about grades. Unless you are going onto graduate school or some similar form of even higher education or your parents are mean, etc., not getting the highest of grades will not ruin your life. Grades are mainly for you, to let you know how much understanding of the material you displayed. This isn't to say you should shoot for "C"s since they "get degrees." The point is that many students don't realize they are in a situation such that getting a B, for example, is not the end of the world.

CHEATING

Don't cheat (this includes *plagiarism*). I warn against this every quarter, and still nearly every quarter at least one person gets busted! **I take this extremely seriously**: I will prosecute any offenses, seeking penalties that can range up to expulsion from the university. At a minimum, cheating will result in **failing the course**.

Believe me, **it's just not worth it** to cheat. Not only is it immoral, it's imprudent. The amount of effort you'd put into cheating and then lying and covering up those lies once you've been caught is probably about how much work is required to get a "C" on the assignment by doing it yourself. Yet if you cheat, you'll fail the entire course.

Furthermore, it's **your responsibility** to make sure your work does not violate university policies about plagiarism and other academic cheating. If you need any help in understanding these standards or are in any doubt about whether your work for this course violates them, check with me. For your convenience, here is the link to UCSB's page on academic dishonesty:

<http://hep.ucsb.edu/people/hnn/conduct/disq.html>

Note well: If you cut something from a web document and paste it into your paper, you are plagiarizing (even if you mix up the wording a bit). The paper you will be asked to write is *not* a

research paper. Just read the material required for class, attend lecture, and think it through. There is no need to look at anything else (including things on the Internet); but if you do, you must of course cite and quote all consulted sources.

EXTRA CREDIT & MAKE-UP ASSIGNMENTS

All students are expected to meet the same standards to pass the course. So there will be **no extra credit** assignments. (The same goes for make-up assignments; in general, you will not be able to make up missed assignments. However, of course, if you have a serious emergency, exceptions *might* be made.)

IV. STUDENT SUPPORT

GENERAL HELP

If you have questions about the material in the course, the best method is likely to communicate with your TA first. He or she is your primary resource for help. But, of course, I am also available.

Talking to me (or your TA) about the material, especially in preparation for an upcoming assignment, is **not just for those who fear failing the course**; it's also for those who want to secure an "A" (or whatever your goal is).

OFFICE HOURS

I encourage you all to talk with me (or your TA) outside of class in office hours. If you are unable to make the regular time slot, contact me (preferably via email) about setting up an appointment to meet at a mutually convenient time. I'm glad to talk to you about philosophy (whether specific to the class or not), and you don't need a specific question formulated to come talk.

EMAIL

I'm available to contact by email. I can even answer relatively short and specific questions via email. If you have a more detailed and lengthy question, come to my office hours.

PAPER DRAFTS

It's a good idea to talk to your TA about your papers before you turn them in. Your TA should be willing to meet with you for this. However, it is up to your TA whether he or she wants to read drafts of your papers in advance. You are welcome to bring in drafts to your TA's office hours to discuss them, but **your TA needn't read through entire drafts**; that could place an unreasonable burden on him or her.

IF YOU FACE MAJOR DIFFICULTIES

If for any reason you face major difficulties—medical or otherwise—get in touch with me **as soon as possible**. I'm happy to work with you to find the best course of action and, if possible, to help you complete the course successfully.

V. READINGS

There is **no exact reading schedule**, and this list is **subject to change**. You'll need to keep coming to class to know where we are on this list and whether any changes have been made.

Students are expected to do the assigned reading. You should do the readings before class. But keep in mind that you are not at all expected to have figured it all out before you walk in the door. If for whatever reason you don't do the reading before class, don't give up on it; you should at least do it sometime soon after that class meeting.

Helpful advice on reading philosophy:

<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/reading.html>

Topic 1: Universals & Existence

1. M. J. Loux (2008) "The Problem of Universals" (intro to Part I)
2. H. H. Price (1953) "Universals and Resemblances" (ch. 2)
Recommended: Bertrand Russell (1912) "The World of Universals" (ch. 1, esp. p. 17)
3. W. V. Quine (1948) "On What There Is" (ch. 3)

Topic 2: Modality (Necessity, Possibility, and Contingency)

1. M. J. Loux (2008) "Modality and Possible Worlds" (intro to Part II)
2. David Lewis (1986) "Possible Worlds" (ch. 10)
Recommended: Lewis (1973) "Counterparts or Double Lives?" (ch. 12, just pp. 194-6)
3. Saul Kripke (1971) "Identity and Necessity" (ch. 13)

Topic 3: Causation

1. M. J. Loux (2008) "Cause and Effect" (intro to Part IV)
2. J. L. Mackie (1965) "Causes and Conditions" (ch. 17)
3. Elizabeth Anscombe (1971) "Causality and Determination" (ch. 16)

Topic 4: Time (& a bit of Space)

1. M. J. Loux (2008) "Time: The A-Theory and the B-Theory" (intro to Part V)
4. J. M. E. McTaggart (1927) "Time" (ch. 19)
Recommended: Dummett (1960) "A Defense of McTaggart's Proof of the Unreality of Time" (excerpt, p. 8, *Philosophical Review*)
- ~~2. A. N. Prior (1970) "The Notion of the Present" (ch. 22)~~
3. J. J. C. Smart (1963) "The Space-Time World" (ch. 23)

Topic 5: Persistence through Time

1. M. J. Loux (2008) "Endurantism and Perdurantism" (intro to Part VI)
Recommended: Heller (1990) "Temporal Parts and Four-Dimensional Objects" (ch. 25, secs. 1-3 & 9)
2. David Lewis (1986) "Counterparts or Double Lives?" (just pp. 198-200 of ch. 12)
- ~~3. Trenton Merricks (1994) "Endurance and Indiscernibility" (ch. 26)~~