**Philosophy & the Nature of Reality**

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| **Course Prefix, Number, Section and CRN:**PHIL 481, section 1, CRN 20922 | **Credit Hours:**3 (3 hours in class & 6 hours out of class per week) |
| **Semester:**Fall 2019 | **Course Location:**Jones 144 |
| **Course Meeting Days & Times:**TR 16:05-17:30 | **Course Format:**Discussion |

**Instructor Name:** Dr. Justin P. McBrayer

**Office Location:** Noble Hall 216

**Office Hours:** 11-2 MW; other times by appointment

**Phone:** 970.247.7349

**Email:** *jpmcbrayer@fortlewis.edu*

**Course Description:** Metaphysics is the branch of philosophy that is concerned with ultimate reality and the puzzles of existence. This course is a survey of metaphysics. We will ask—and begin to answer—some of the most significant metaphysical questions on tap, including questions about the existence and nature of free will, the nature of the self, the identity and nature of the ultimate constituents of reality, and more.

*Disclaimer:* the word ‘metaphysics’ is ambiguous. In one sense of the term, metaphysics is some kind of New Agey, palm-reading, crystal vortex, faith healing, pot smoking, spirituality kind of nonsense. In a different sense of the term, metaphysics is the area of philosophy that investigates what we might think of as “ultimate reality.” *Caveat emptor*: this is a course in the latter, not the former!

**Course goals for the Philosophy Program:**

* As a topical course in philosophy, the primary outcome of this course is a competence with a range of philosophical problems and arguments in metaphysics. (Philosophy Program Learning Outcome #1)
* A secondary outcome of this course includes the honing of a student’s ability to identify and critically evaluate arguments. (Philosophy Program Learning Outcome #4)
* Another secondary outcome of this course is the continued development of a student’s written communication skills as they relate to the presentation of philosophical arguments in a clear and convincing way. (Philosophy Program Learning Outcome #5)

**Assessment:** The grade for this course is determined by how well a student meets the course goals in a timely fashion. When it comes to learning how to do philosophy, this is largely a measurement of a student’s understanding of the concepts presented and his ability to articulate arguments regarding various philosophical positions. Grades are tracked on Canvas. Plus/minus grading will be used. Grades will not be curved. The grading scale is the standard scale (90’s A-range, 80’s B-range…59 and lower is an F). Final grades will be determined by the following weighted averages:

**Exams-** there will be a midterm exam and a final (non-cumulative) exam. Each is worth 20%.

**Essays-** there are two essay assignments (details to follow). Each is worth 20%.

**Reading Notes-** I will collect reading notes at random over the course of the session and the average of these notes is worth 20%

**Course Resources:**

*A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will*, Kane (Oxford 2005)

*What are We?* Olson (Oxford 2007)

*An Introduction to Metaphysics,* Carroll and Markosian (Cambridge 2010)

*Philosophical Writing: An Introduction,* 3e, Martinich (Blackwell 2005)-RECOMMENDED BUT NOT REQUIRED AND SO NOT AT THE BOOKSTORE

Other readings available on Canvas: <https://courses.fortlewis.edu/> [Sidebar ‘Files’]

**Course Expectations:**

**Academic Dishonesty**- All work submitted for credit should be the student’s own. Failure to follow this policy will result in a failing grade for the course. It is the student’s responsibility to know both the standards for academic honesty and what counts as plagiarism. The full policy is available here: *http://www.fortlewis.edu/portals/12/docs/PART-III-Academic-Dishonesty.pdf*

**Attendance-** There is not an official attendance policy, though, as always, there will be a strong (and positive!) correlation between strong performance in the course and regular attendance.

**Civility-** Everyone is expected to be civil. At a minimum, this includes routinely entering class late or departing early; making or receiving phone calls; texting; surfing the internet; repeatedly talking in class without being recognized; talking while other are speaking, etc.

**Miscellaneous-**

* Missed exams may be made up with a verified medical excuse (or its moral equivalent) or with the prior consent of the instructor.
* Essays are accepted late with a 10 point per day or partial day late policy.
* Reading notes cannot be made up for any reason and must be turned in at the appropriate time or in advance. In the interest of fairness, I will drop two of your lowest quiz scores from the overall average at the end of the semester.

**Disability Services:** Fort Lewis College is committed to providing all students a liberal arts education through a personalized learning environment. If you think you have or you do have a documented disability which will need reasonable academic accommodations, please contact the Director of Disability Services for an appointment as soon as possible (280 Noble Hall, 970.247.7459).

**Course Schedule:**

Sept. 3 What is metaphysics? Peter van Inwagen (by email)

Free Will

Sept. 5 The Problem of Free will & Compatibilism

*A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will,* chapters 1-2

Sept. 10 The Consequence Argument & Libertarianism

*A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will*, chapters 3-4

Sept. 12 Libertarian Strategies to solve the “Descent Problem”

*A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will,* chapters 5-6

Sept. 17 Free Will Skeptics, Part I: Hard Determinists and Hard Incompatibilists

*A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will,* chapter 7

**Census Day (last day to drop the course without a grade)**

Sept. 19 Free Will Skeptics, Part II: Theological Hard Determinism

*A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will,* chapter 13

Sept. 24Moral Responsibility with PAP

*A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will,* chapter 8

Sept. 26 Moral Responsibility without PAP

*A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will,* chapters 9-10

Oct. 1 Ultimate Responsibility and Event Causal Libertarianism, and 5 Freedoms

*A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will,* chapters 11-12

Oct. 3 Five Freedoms and our own conclusions about Free Will

*A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will,* chapter 14

**Oct. 6 (Sunday) Essay 1 due by 11:59 pm!**

Metaphysical Topics

Oct. 8 Causation, Part I

*An Introduction to Metaphysics*, chapter 2.1-2.4

Oct. 10 Causation, Part II

*An Introduction to Metaphysics*, chapter 2.5-2.7

**Oct. 15 Midterm Examination**

Oct. 17 Time, Part I

*An Introduction to Metaphysics*, chapter 7.1-7.6

Oct. 22 Time, Part II

*An Introduction to Metaphysics*, chapter 7.7-7.12

Oct. 24 Mental States, Part I

*An Introduction to Metaphysics*, chapter 6.1-6.4

Oct. 29 Mental States, Part II

*An Introduction to Metaphysics*, chapter 6.5-6.6

Oct. 31 Material Objects, Part I

*An Introduction to Metaphysics*, chapter 8.1-8.9

Nov. 5 Material Objects, Part II

*An Introduction to Metaphysics*, chapter 8.10-8.15

Nov. 7 Metaphysics and Contemporary Physics

“Quantum Physics,” Kuhlman (Canvas)

“Physics is Pointing Inexorably to Mind,” Kastrup (Canvas)

Personal Ontology

Nov. 12 The Question

*What Are We?* Chapter 1

Nov. 14 Animalism

*What Are We?* Chapter 2

Nov. 19 Constitutionalism

*What Are We?* Chapter 3

Nov. 21 The Brain View

*What Are We?* Chapter 4

**November 25-29 Thanksgiving Break!**

Dec. 3 The Four-Dimensionalist View

*What Are We?* Chapter 5, except § 5.2

Dec. 5 Bundle View

*What Are We?* Chapter 6

Dec. 10 Soul View

*What Are We?* Chapter 7

Dec. 12 Nihilism and Moving On

*What Are We?* Chapters 8 & 9

**Monday, December 16, 2:15-4:15 Final Exam**

**Wednesday, December 18 Essay 2 due by 11:59 pm!**