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**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** This course is a topical introduction to contemporary metaphysics. Metaphysics is often described as the study of the ultimate nature of reality. The best means for getting a better understanding of this obscure description is via acquaintance with the questions, problems, and debates discussed in metaphysics. In this course we will discuss metaphysical questions such as the following: What is the nature of time? Is time travel possible? In what way do things persist through time? What am I and what makes me now the same person I was as a small child? Are my actions free? How are effects related to their causes? Are there any abstract entities?

**GOALS & OBJECTIVES:** As a result of studying these topics students will gain a wide range of knowledge and develop a number of skills whose value extends well beyond the classroom. There are five main goals of this course. The first two are specific to the course material. The last three pertain to more general skills that are necessary for success in any field.

- Achieve an understanding of influential views, arguments, and problems in metaphysics.
- Develop a critical perspective on those views, arguments, and problems.
- Improve one's ability to interpret texts and reconstruct arguments.
- Improve one's ability to *evaluate* arguments.
- Improve one's ability to carefully and clearly communicate ideas and arguments both verbally and in writing.

**TEXTS:** The only *required* text is: Van Inwagen and Zimmerman's *Metaphysics: The Big Questions* 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (Blackwell, 2008). ISBN: 1405125861. I also highly recommend purchasing a copy of Carroll and Markosian's *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (Cambridge University Press, 2010). ISBN: 0521533686. Both are available at the university bookstore.

*USEFUL RESOURCES:*

- For general strategies for how to approach the reading see Jim Pryor's "Guidelines on Reading Philosophy" at <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/reading.html>
- For general strategies for writing your papers see Jim Pryor's "Guidelines on Writing a Philosophy Paper" (this is the best introduction to writing philosophy papers I have ever come across) at <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>

**GRADING SCALE:**

A+	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	F
100-98	97-93	92-90	89-87	86-83	82-80	79-77	76-73	72-70	69-67	66-63	62-60	59-0

**GRADING:** I'll use plus/minus grading, but note that I'll only award an "A+" in extraordinary circumstances. Your final grade will be calculated on the basis of 2 papers, 2 in-class exams, and a number of short assignments.

*PAPERS:* 45% of your grade comes from two paper assignments (20% for the 1<sup>st</sup> paper; 25% for the 2<sup>nd</sup>). Detailed instructions and grading criteria for the assignments will be provided (at least) a week prior to the due date both in class and on ICON. *Note: I'll give an option to rewrite the 1<sup>st</sup> paper in light of my comments. If the rewrite shows either no or only relatively minor improvement then your initial paper grade will remain unaffected. If the rewrite shows noteworthy improvement then your initial paper grade will receive a 1/3<sup>rd</sup> letter grade boost. If the rewrite shows outstanding improvement then your initial paper grade will receive a 2/3<sup>rd</sup> letter grade boost.*

*EXAMS:* 40% of your grade comes from two exams (18% from the midterm and 22% from the final). These exams will consist of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. The midterm will be given in class. The final will be given during the scheduled final exam time.

*SHORT ASSIGNMENTS:* 15% of your grade comes from a variety of short assignments. These assignments are designed to help you develop the skills necessary for doing philosophy, and should help you prepare

for the exams and papers. Assignments may include pop quizzes, worksheets, summarizing arguments, reading responses, etc. These assignments will be assigned throughout the semester. Besides the pop-quizzes, the short assignments will be announced in class and on ICON.

*ATTENDANCE:* Attendance will not *directly* affect your grade. However, attendance can affect your grade indirectly. Firstly, participation in class discussion can raise your final grade *up to* 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of a grade, and it's difficult to participate if you don't attend regularly. Secondly, short assignments and exams can only be made up if you have an excuse allowable under the College of Liberal Arts policies and you have proper documentation. Finally, this class is very difficult and (trust me on this) you will not do well if you don't attend regularly.

**ACADEMIC HONESTY:** I will use turnitin.com. Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Plagiarism will result in a zero for the assignment and will be reported to the college. *Trust me... Plagiarism is not in your best interest; I will catch you!*

**NOTES ABOUT THE SCHEDULE:** Readings are to be done *before* the class period for which they are listed. Readings with a "\*" can be found online at the class website. These readings are tentative and may be altered depending on how class discussion develops.

## **TENTATIVE SCHEDULE\***

\*SUBJECT TO CHANGE

### **UNIT 1: MATERIAL OBJECTS & THEIR PERSISTENCE THROUGH TIME**

\*Sider: "Constitution"

Olsen: "The Paradox of Increase"

Lewis: "In Defense of Stages" & "The Problem of Temporary Intrinsic"

### **UNIT 2: PERSONAL IDENTITY**

Shoemaker: "Personal Identity: A Materialist Account"

\*Williams: "The Self and the Future"

Olsen: "An Argument for Animalism"

### **UNIT 3: DETERMINISM & FREE WILL**

\*Ree: "Determinism and the Illusion of Moral Responsibility"

\*Hume: "Of Liberty and Necessity"

Van Inwagen: "The Consequence Argument"

Chisholm: "Human Freedom and the Self"

Frankfurt: "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility"

### **UNIT 4: TIME**

McTaggart: "Time"

Broad: "McTaggart's Arguments against the Reality of Time"

Prior: "The Notion of the Present" & "Some Free Thinking about Time"

Broad: "The General Problem of Time and Change"

Williams "The Myth of Passage"

### **UNIT 5: PROPERTIES**

Armstrong: "Universals as Attributes"

Price: "Universals and Resemblances"

Williams: "The Elements of Being"

## Teaching Policies & Procedures

**Administrative Home.** The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) is the administrative home of this course and governs matters such as the add/drop deadlines, the second-grade-only option, and other related issues. Different colleges may have different policies. Questions may be addressed to 120 Schaeffer Hall, or see the CLAS *Student Academic Handbook*.

**Electronic Communication.** University policy specifies that students are responsible for all official correspondences sent to their University of Iowa e-mail address. Faculty and students should use this account for correspondences. (*Operations Manual*, III.15.2. Scroll down to k.11.)

**Accommodations for Disabilities.** A student seeking academic accommodations should first register with Student Disability Services and then meet privately with the course instructor to make particular arrangements. See [www.uiowa.edu/~sds/](http://www.uiowa.edu/~sds/) for more information.

**Academic Fraud.** Plagiarism and any other activities when students present work that is not their own are academic fraud. Academic fraud is a serious matter and is reported to the departmental DEO and to the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs and Curriculum. Instructors and DEOs decide on appropriate consequences at the departmental level while the Associate Dean enforces additional consequences at the collegiate level. See the CLAS Academic Fraud section of the *Student Academic Handbook*.

**University Examination Policy** requires that students be permitted to make up examinations missed because of illness, mandatory religious obligations, certain University activities, or unavoidable circumstances. Excused absence forms are available at [www.registrar.uiowa.edu/forms/absence.pdf](http://www.registrar.uiowa.edu/forms/absence.pdf).

**Final Examination Policies.** Final exams may be offered only during finals week. No exams of any kind are allowed during the last week of classes. Students should not ask their instructor to reschedule a final exam since the College does not permit rescheduling of a final exam once the semester has begun. Questions should be addressed to the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs and Curriculum.

**Conflicts in Final Exams.** CLAS is instituting a new final exam scheduling process and, as such, the final exam time will not be scheduled until the 5th or 6th week of the semester. **It is your responsibility to notify the registrar if there is a conflict between the final exam for this class and your other final exams.** A student who has (a) two examinations scheduled for the same period or (b) more than three examinations scheduled for the same day, should file a request for a change of schedule at the Registration Center, 30 Calvin Hall.

**Making a Suggestion or a Complaint.** Students with a suggestion or complaint should first visit the instructor, then the course supervisor, and then the departmental DEO. Complaints must be made within six months of the incident. See the CLAS *Student Academic Handbook*.

**Understanding Sexual Harassment.** Sexual harassment subverts the mission of the University and threatens the well-being of students, faculty, and staff. All members of the UI community have a responsibility to uphold this mission and to contribute to a safe environment that enhances learning. Incidents of sexual harassment should be reported immediately. See the UI [Comprehensive Guide on Sexual Harassment](#) for assistance, definitions, and the full University policy.

**Reacting Safely to Severe Weather.** In severe weather, class members should seek appropriate shelter immediately, leaving the classroom if necessary. The class will continue if possible when the event is over. For more information on Hawk Alert and the siren warning system, visit the Public Safety [web site](#).

**Student Classroom Behavior.** The ability to learn is lessened when students engage in inappropriate classroom behavior, distracting others; such behaviors are a violation of the [Code of Student Life](#). When disruptive activity occurs, a University instructor has the authority to determine classroom seating patterns and to request that a student exit immediately for the remainder of the period. One-day suspensions are reported to appropriate departmental, collegiate, and Student Services personnel (Office of the Vice President for [Student Services](#) and Dean of Students).

**Absences.** Except in cases of illness or emergency, you should let your instructor know beforehand if you need to be excused from attendance. You can do this either by providing an Explanatory Statement of Absence from Class form (available at <http://www.uiowa.edu/registrar/forms/absence.htm> or from the Registration Center, 30 Calvin Hall) or a statement from a responsible official documenting the times of your participation in an authorized University activity. In the case of emergency or serious illness, please contact your instructor as soon as possible and offer appropriate documentation so that we can discuss your options. If you are absent for more than five days, you may ask the Registration Center to tell each instructor the reason. Instructors may request further documentation of the absence. In addition, you may ask clinicians at Student Health (4189 Westlawn, 5-8392) to discuss your illness and possible accommodations with your instructor if you have health problems.