

THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
Undergraduate Course Outline 2015-2016

Philosophy 1030B:
Understanding Science: How Science Relates to the Natural and Social World

Winter Term 2015
MW 11:30–12:30
Talbot College 205

Instructor: Wayne C. Myrvold
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Office: Stevenson Hall 4143
Office Hours: MW 11:30–12:30, or by appointment

DESCRIPTION

This non-essay course is aimed at non-science majors who want to gain an understanding of the place of science in our world and how it relates to other parts of our culture, and at science students who want to gain an appreciation of the place of their discipline in the wider culture.

Science plays a central role in our lives. It is the source of new technological developments, and of information about safety and risks that are relevant to our decisions as individuals and as a society. Yet many people find science disquieting. There is a feeling that science destroys the wonder of nature. Moreover, many people mistrust what science tells us about the world.

In this course we will dive into an investigation of the nature of science and its place in modern culture. Among the questions to be addressed are: What distinguishes science from non-science? Are there limits to what science can or should explain? Should we place our trust in science? How can we, as non-scientists, tell whether we should rely on what news reports tell us about the results of scientific studies? What is the relationship between science and religion? What is the role and value of science in a democratic society?

TEXTS

Assigned readings available on the course OWL site.

OBJECTIVES

In this course, students will learn to critically read and assess the reliability of reports in the media about science. They will be able to identify the main schools of thought on the distinction between science and non-science, and on the value of science.

REQUIREMENTS

Attendance and active participation in class discussion; two short (2–3 pp) written assignments; 3 tests. If there is enough interest, students may elect to substitute participation in an in-class debate for one of the written assignments.

- Written Assignments:

# 1 (Due Sept. 25)	10%
# 2 (Due Nov. 6)	10%
# 3 (Due Dec. 9)	10%

- Tests:

Test 1 (Oct. 9)	20%
Test 2 (Nov. 20)	20%
Test 3 (TBA, exam period)	30%

Assignments are to be handed in by 3:45 PM on the due date. If you are unable to hand your assignment directly to the instructor, place it in the Philosophy Department drop-off box, which is on the first floor of Stevenson Hall. *Make sure that your student number and the instructor's name are on your assignment.* Late assignments will be penalized 5% per day late.

In conformity with departmental policy all written assignments must be submitted to turnitin.com for plagiarism checking by the due date. Assignments not submitted to turnitin by the due date will be counted as late, and students will not receive credit for written assignments not submitted to turnitin.com.

No papers will be accepted after the last day of classes, Dec. 9, 2015.

AUDIT

Students wishing to audit the course should consult with the instructor prior to or during the first week of classes.

The **Department of Philosophy Policies** which govern the conduct, standards, and expectations for student participation in Philosophy courses is available in the Undergraduate section of the Department of Philosophy website at <http://uwo.ca/philosophy/undergraduate/proceduresappeals.html>. It is your responsibility to understand the policies set out by the Senate and the Department of Philosophy, and thus ignorance of these policies cannot be used as grounds of appeal.

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.