

THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
Course Outline

Phil 3601G
“Metaphysics”

Fall Term 2019

Instructor: Robert J. Stainton

Class Days and Hours: W 12:30-1:30; W 12:30-1:30; Th 12:30-1:30

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Classroom: TBA

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DESCRIPTION

An introduction to recent debates on metaphysical questions. This year’s focal topic will be propositions, which connects closely with: what kinds of things there are; the “being of non-being”; the nature of unity; linguistic and mental meanings; Idealism; and modality. We will approach the topic of propositions through the lens of four key figures in Analytic metaphysics: Frege, Moore, Russell and Kripke.

TEXTS

Michael Beaney (1997), *The Frege Reader*

Bertrand Russell (1985), *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism*

Saul Kripke (1980), *Identity and Necessity*

OBJECTIVES

The twin objectives are honing of philosophical skills and enriching students’ familiarity with some “touchstone” material in 20th Century Metaphysics in the Analytic tradition. In terms of skills, the emphasis will be on: advanced philosophical writing; close reading of notoriously challenging texts; methodological reflection; and respectful but incisive philosophical dialogue.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Six “Briefing Notes”: 50%

- On the day they are discussed in class, students will submit 2-3 page (i.e., 750-1000 words) “reader responses” to selected writings, consisting of an outline of the central *argument*, along with the student’s comments and questions. (This is to be sharply contrasted with an outline of the *paper*, section-by-section.)

- Each Briefing Note is worth 10%, and all are obligatory. However, the lowest grade will be dropped

Glossary: 15%
Final Exam: 25%
Class Participation: 10%

COURSE READINGS

I. Frege

(1891) "Function and Concept"
(1892) "On Sense and Reference"
(1892) "On Concept and Object"
(1918) "The Thought"
(1918) "Negation"

II. Moore

(1899) "The Nature of Judgment"
(1925) "A Defense of Common Sense"
(1939) "Proof of an External World"

III. Russell

(1905) "On Denoting"
(1919) "Descriptions"
(1911) "Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description"
(1918) *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism*

IV. Kripke

(1980) *Naming and Necessity*

AUDIT

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

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY POLICIES

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/policies.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.

ACCOMMODATION

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Office of the Dean of the student's Faculty of registration, together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested. The UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness and further information regarding this

policy can be found at

http://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf.

SELF- REPORTED ABSENCE FORM

Students who experience an unexpected illness or injury or an extenuating circumstance (48 hours or less) that is sufficiently severe to temporarily render them unable to meet academic requirements (e.g., attending lectures or labs, writing tests or midterm exams, completing and submitting assignments, participating in presentations) should self-declare using the online Self-Reported Absence portal. This option should be used in situations where the student expects to resume academic responsibilities within 48 hours or less.

The following conditions are in place for self-reporting of medical or extenuating circumstances:

http://westerncalendar.uwo.ca/PolicyPages.cfm?Command=showCategory&PolicyCategoryID=1&SelectedCalendar=Live&ArchiveID=#SubHeading_322

EVALUATION OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

At least three days prior to the deadline for withdrawal from a course without academic penalty, students will receive assessment of work accounting for at least 15% of their final grade. For 3000- or 4000-level courses in which such a graded assessment is impracticable, the instructor(s) must obtain an exemption from this policy from the Dean and this exemption must be noted on the corresponding course syllabus. In rare instances and at the Dean's discretion, other courses could receive a similar exemption, which also must be noted in the course syllabus.

COURSE ASSIGNMENT

The last day of scheduled classes in any course will be the last day on which course assignments will be accepted for credit in a course. Instructors will be required to return assignments to students as promptly as possible with reasonable explanations of the instructor's assessment of the assignment.

ACADEMIC OFFENCES

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

PLAGIARISM CHECKING

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com <http://www.turnitin.com>.

SUPPORT SERVICES

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Student Development Centre <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

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. Immediate help in the event of a crisis can be had by phoning (519) 661-3030 (during class hours) or (519) 433-2023 after class hours and on weekends.