

Updated July 31, 2020

**Phil 390, Honours Tutorial, 3 credits
Term 1 2020-21**

Instructor: Matthew S. Bedke matt.bedke@ubc.ca Office: Buchanan Block E, room 366 Office Hrs: Tuesdays, 10-11am or by appointment	Course: Phil 390 3 credits, lecture/seminar Meets Wednesdays 2-5pm Pacific time on Zoom
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Note on COVID-19 and this course:

Due to COVID-19, this course will be online. I ask that you make yourself during the assigned meeting time (Wed 2-5pm Pacific Time) for synchronous course activities using A/V capture software Zoom. I ask that you turn on video and audio for our synchronous meetings. During the first meeting I will go over the structure of the course and we will discuss which portion(s) of that reserved in-class time we will use for synchronous activities. My tentative suggestion is to use only 1.5 hours for general lecture/discussion, and to dedicate the other 1.5 hours to asynchronous learning, including watching some videos I plan to post where I discuss the main points of the readings.

Please do the assigned readings for day 1 (see reading schedule below), and do connect via Zoom for our first class on Sept 9th at 2.00pm Pacific Time.

The forms of assessment will not require A/V capture while you complete them.

Prerequisites:

Admission to the Honours Program in Philosophy. Some familiarity with logic or formal philosophy is helpful but not necessary.

More generally, this course will cover some challenging philosophical material and each paper should be read more than once. It will be a lot of work, but I know 3rd year honours students are up for it!

Learning Materials:

The main text is [The Nature of Truth](#), edited by Michael Lynch and published by MIT Press (2001). This contains many of the most influential historical and contemporary readings on the nature of truth. The entire book is available online through UBC's Library: <https://direct-mit-edu.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/books/book/3935/The-Nature-of-TruthClassic-and-Contemporary>

The Canvas site contains the syllabus and uploaded videos I will be recording.

Other readings you might find helpful if you have the time to do some background reading:

- The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy has excellent overviews of some of the topics we'll discuss, such as truth, the correspondence theory of truth, the coherence theory of truth, pragmatism, pluralist theories of truth, Tarski's truth definitions, the deflationary theory of truth, and the liar paradox.
- Burgess & Burgess: *Truth*. An quirky introduction, focusing on deflationism.
- Scott Soames' *Understanding Truth* is another helpful introduction that is critical of deflationary views.

Course Description and Outcomes:

Consider the following sentences.

1. Grass is green.
2. When Caesar crossed the Rubicon, he disturbed a school of fish.
3. Beethoven's 5th Symphony has 4 movements.
4. We are morally obligated to keep our promises.
5. We are morally obligated to maximize pleasure.
6. $E^{(i*\pi)} = -1$
7. $2-2=5$

We might wonder *which* of these is true. In this class we set such questions to one side. Instead we ask *what is truth*, or what is it for a sentence/proposition to be true? Some say for a sentence to be true is for the sentence to *correspond* to a fact. If so, to say something is true is to say there is a real relation between a representational item (a sentence) and something represented (a fact). Perhaps puzzled by the metaphysics of mathematical or moral facts, others say that this is over-blown, that to assert a sentence is true is to say no more than asserting the sentence itself. So if the sentence "We are morally obligated to keep our promises" is not itself committed to a corresponding metaphysically heavy-duty moral fact, then saying the sentence is true isn't either. If that's right, truth has been deflated.

Don't worry if none of that makes sense yet! After taking this course students should experience the following learning outcomes: ability to display knowledge of the most influential theories of the nature of truth and the philosophical debates between them, familiarity of the semantic paradoxes and ability to assess their philosophical implications for theorizing about truth, ability to formulate one's own views about the nature of truth.

Learning Activities:

Students are expected to do the readings in advance, view the lectures/discussion posted online, stay focused and undistracted during the synchronous portions of the class, and to actively participate in classroom discussions. Students are also required to submit all assignments on time.

Assessments of Learning:

Your final mark for the course will be determined by the following assessments:

50%: A final essay exam during the exam period. Throughout the term I will provide you with practice question topics, and if you do well on those question topics you will be well prepared

for the final exam. The exam will provide you with some choice in the questions you answer. It will be under a time constraint and you will be asked to complete it during the exam period. I will not require A/V capture while you complete this assessment.

50%: A final term paper due on Dec. 16th. The term paper should be a maximum of 4500 words (roughly 15 pages) but can be as short as 3000 words (roughly 9 pages). The topic of the paper is up to the student but the topic should engage with at least one of the readings and the topic must be approved by the instructor no later than Dec. 2nd. You can choose to write a paper with one other student, if you wish, or solo author the paper.

Relationship between percentages and letter grades:

90-100% A+	85-89% A	80-84% A-
76-79% B+	72-75% B	68-71% B-
64-67% C+	60-63% C	55-59% C-
50-54% D	0-49% F	

A Range: Exceptional Performance. Mastery of the subject matter; strong evidence of original thinking; good organization in written work; impressive capacity to analyze; insightful critical evaluations.

B Range: Competent Performance. Evidence of grasp of subject matter; some evidence of critical capacity and analytic ability; reasonable understanding of relevant issues.

C Range: Adequate Performance. Understanding of the subject matter; ability to develop solutions to simple problems in the material; acceptable but uninspired work; not seriously faulty but lacking style and vigour.

D Range: Problematic Performance. Some incomplete understanding of the subject matter; limited evidence of critical and analytical skills; lack of original thinking.

F Range: Inadequate Performance. Little or no evidence of understanding of the subject matter; little or no evidence of critical and analytical skills; limited or irrelevant use of the literature.

University Policies:

UBC provides resources to support student learning and to maintain healthy lifestyles but recognizes that sometimes crises arise and so there are additional resources to access including those for survivors of sexual violence. UBC values respect for the person and ideas of all members of the academic community. Harassment and discrimination are not tolerated nor is suppression of academic freedom. UBC provides appropriate accommodation for students with disabilities and for religious observances. UBC values academic honesty and students are expected to acknowledge the ideas generated by others and to uphold the highest academic standards in all of their actions.

Details of the policies and how to access support are available on [the UBC Senate website](#).

Academic Integrity and Responsibility:

As a member of this class, you are responsible for contributing to the course objectives through

your participation in class activities and your work on essays, exams, and other projects. In the process of coming into your own as an independent, responsible participant in the academic community, you are encouraged to seek advice, clarification, and guidance in your learning from your instructor and/or Teaching Assistant. If you decide to seek help beyond the resources of this course, you are responsible for ensuring that this help does not lead you to submit others' work as your own. If an outside tutor or other person helps you, show this policy to your tutor or helper: make sure you both understand the limits of this person's permissible contribution. If you are uncertain, consult your instructor or TA.

Academic communities depend on their members' honesty and integrity in representing the sources of reasoning, claims, and wordings which appear in their work. Like any other member of the academic community, you will be held responsible for the accurate representation of your sources: the means by which you produced the work you are submitting. If you are found to have misrepresented your sources and to have submitted others' work as your own, penalties will follow. At the least, you will receive a zero for the assignment. Your case may be forwarded to the Head of the department. The Head will report your case to the Dean's Office, where the report will remain on file. The Head may decide, in consultation with your instructor, that a greater penalty is called for, and will forward your case to the Dean's Office. After an interview in the Dean's Office, your case may be forwarded to the President's Advisory Committee on Academic Misconduct. Following a hearing in which you will be asked to account for your actions, the President may apply penalties including zero for the assignment; zero for the course; suspension from the university for a period ranging from 4 to 24 months; a notation on your permanent record. The penalty may be a combination of these.

Like any academic author submitting work for review and evaluation, you are guaranteeing that the work you submit for this course has not already been submitted for credit in another course. Your submitting work from another course, without your instructor's prior agreement, may result in penalties such as those applied to the misrepresentation of sources.

You are expected to adhere to UBC's policies concerning academic honesty and standards. In particular, do not plagiarize. An excerpt about plagiarism and a link to the UBC policy on academic misconduct is provided below.

Plagiarism, which is intellectual theft, occurs where an individual submits or presents the oral or written work of another person as his or her own. Scholarship quite properly rests upon examining and referring to the thoughts and writings of others. However, when another person's words (i.e. phrases, sentences, or paragraphs), ideas, or entire works are used, the author must be acknowledged in the text, in footnotes, in endnotes, or in another accepted form of academic citation. Where direct quotations are made, they must be clearly delineated (for example, within quotation marks or separately indented). Failure to provide proper attribution is plagiarism because it represents someone else's work as one's own. Plagiarism should not occur in submitted drafts or final works. A student who seeks assistance from a tutor or other scholastic aids must ensure that the work submitted is the student's own. Students are responsible for ensuring that any work submitted does not constitute plagiarism. Students who are in any doubt as to what constitutes plagiarism should consult their instructor before

handing in any assignments

Learning Analytics:

Learning analytics includes the collection and analysis of data about learners to improve teaching and learning. This course will be using the following learning technologies: Canvas and Zoom. Many of these tools capture data about your activity and provide information that can be used to improve the quality of teaching and learning. In this course, I plan to use analytics data to:

- View overall class progress
- Track your progress in order to provide you with personalized feedback

Learning Resources:

Some learning resources are available on the Canvas website, such as links to helpful information about writing philosophy papers. I also want to bring your attention to the Philosophy Essay Clinic: <https://philosophy.ubc.ca/undergraduate/philosophy-essay-clinic/>

Copyright:

All materials of this course (any handouts, lecture slides, assessments, course readings, etc.) are the intellectual property of the Course Instructor or licensed to be used in this course by the copyright owner. Redistribution of these materials by any means without permission of the copyright holder(s) constitutes a breach of copyright and may lead to academic discipline. Note: recording of the course is not permitted.

Reading Schedule: (meetings at 2pm on Zoom)

Session	Date	Topic	Readings to Discuss
1	9-Sep-20	Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• "Introduction: The Mystery of Truth" in Lynch• "Realism and the Correspondence Theory: Introduction" in Lynch
2	16-Sep-20	Correspondence Theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Russell, "Truth and Falsehood" in Lynch Ch. 1• Austin, "Truth" in Lynch Ch. 2
3	23-Sep-20		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Alston, "A Realist Conception of Truth" in Lynch Ch. 3
4	30-Sep-20	Epistemic Theories	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• "Coherence Theories: Introduction" in Lynch• Walker, "The Coherence Theory", in Lynch Ch. 6
5	7-Oct-20		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• "Pragmatism and Verificationism: Introduction" In Lynch• Dummett, "Truth" in Lynch Ch. 10
6	14-Oct-20	Tarski's Theory of Truth	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• "Tarski's Theory and Its Importance: Introduction" in Lynch• Burgess & Burgess, "Tarski" (through section 2.3; other sections optional), in <i>Truth</i>, available online• *Optional*: Tarski, "The Semantic Conception of Truth and the Foundations of Semantics" in Lynch

			Ch. 15
7	21-Oct-20		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Field, "Tarski's Theory of Truth" in Lynch Ch. 16
8	28-Oct-20	Kripke's Theory of Truth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Burgess & Burgess, "Kripke" (through section 7.3; other sections optional), in <i>Truth</i>, available online • *Optional*: Kripke, "Outline of a Theory of Truth", available online
9	4-Nov-20	Deflationism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Deflationary Views and Their Critics: Introduction" in Lynch • Ramsey, "The Nature of Truth" in Lynch Ch. 18
10	11-Nov-20		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Field, "Deflationist Views of Meaning and Content" (1994), available online • Gupta, "A Critique of Deflationism" in Lynch Ch. 23
11	18-Nov-20		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Horwich, "A Defense of Minimalism" in Lynch Ch. 24 • Devitt, "The Metaphysics of Truth" in Lynch Ch. 25
12	25-Nov-20		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grover, "The Prosentential Theory" in Lynch Ch. 22
13	2-Dec-20	Pluralism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lynch, "A Functional Theory of Truth" in Lynch Ch. 31 • Wright, "Minimalism, Deflationism, Pragmatism, Pluralism" in Lynch Ch. 32
	16-Dec-20	Final Paper Due	
	Final exam allotted time	Final Exam	