

Syllabus for Phil340, Spring term 2025

METAPHYSICS

Instructor: Dr Anders Kraal

1. Course Description

This course offers an overview of contemporary metaphysics, one of the core subfields of modern academic philosophy. We consider four main topics: (i) the question of what exists (i.e. the problem of finding criteria for when something (e.g. a person, a tree, a cat, a colour, a table, a nation, a music track) could be said to have mind-independent existence; (ii) the question of whether amongst the things that exist there are immaterial minds; (iii) the question of whether amongst the things that exist there are free wills; and (iv) the question of whether amongst the things that exist there are such things as “the past” and “the future.”

2. Lectures. MWF 2:00-2:50 in LASR 102

3. Instructor. Dr. Anders Kraal (anders.kraal@ubc.ca)

4. Instructor Office Hours. TBA

5. Instructor Email Policy. Instructor will read and reply to emails weekdays

6. Teaching Assistant. TBA. (The TA will be marking exams and papers, and will answer questions about marked work via email.)

7. Required Texts.

All course readings consist of papers that will be uploaded to the Canvas course page. There is no need to purchase any materials.

8. Course Requirements

In-Class Exam (x3): In the in-class exams, you will be asked to provide answers to questions dealing with matters brought up in class prior to the date of the exam. If you miss these exams you will automatically be assigned 0 points unless you provide the TA with an UBC Academic Calendar approved rationale for make-up exam or transfer of the weight to the final exam.

Final Exam: The final exam will be held during UBC’s final examinations period. A missed final exam will be assigned 0p unless an explanation is provided that is acceptable by the standards of the UBC Academic Calendar (in which case there will be a standing deferred final exam).

9. Learning Outcomes

At the end of the course the student will be expected to (i) be familiar with ideas and arguments about the four main topics of this course mention in the Course Description; (ii) have engaged in critical reflection on these topics; and (iii) be able to demonstrate this familiarity and reflection in answers on written exams.

10. Lecture Recordings

Lectures will be recorded and uploaded for easy student access typically within 2 days of the lecture in question. Link to recording playlist will be provided at beginning of term.

11. Marking Parameters

Your mark in this course will be a function of three main factors: i) your performance on the examinable momenta relative to your peers, ii) your comprehension of the course material, iii) demonstration of skill in assessing and evaluating philosophical ideas.

12. Marking Scale

A+ 90-100% / **A** 85-89% / **A-** 80-84% / **B+** 76-79% / **B** 72-75% / **B-** 68-71%

C+ 64-67% / **C** 60-63% / **C-** 55-59% / **D** 50-54% / **F** 0-49%

The degree of difficulty on the examinable momenta will be set so as to *aim* at a class average outcome that by and large conforms to the department average for this course down the years. Upwards scaling may be used to this effect.

13. Policy on Review of Marked Work

Marks on exams and papers will be posted on canvas. Feedback on expected outcomes of exams and papers will be provided (typically by the Instructor) in so-called Feedback Sessions. Any concerns about the marking of a paper or exam should be submitted to the marker (typically the TA) via email, and will be responded to (typically by the TA) via email.

14. Plagiarism (from the UBC Academic Calendar)

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. See also <http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/Vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,54,111,959>

15. UBC Values and Policies (from the UBC Academic Calendar)

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 and cultural 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 here (<https://senate.ubc.ca/policiesresources-support-student-success>).

16. Schedule (more detailed schedule will be published on canvas)

6/1 Introductory remarks

Topic 1: the question of what exists

8/1 Bertrand Russell

10/1 Bertrand Russell

13/1 Bertrand Russell

15/1 Bertrand Russell

17/1 Ludwig Wittgenstein and Gilbert Ryle

20/1 WVO Quine

22/1 WVO Quine

24/1 Richard Routley

27/1 Richard Routley

29/1 David Lewis

31/1 David Lewis

3/2 Graham Priest

5/2 Graham Priest

7/2 Saul Kripke

10/2 Saul Kripke

12/2 Peter van Inwagen

14/2 Peter van Inwagen

17/2 Family Day: no class

19/2 Exam1 (worth 20%)

Topic 2: the question of immaterial minds

21/2 TBD

24/2 David Chalmers

26/2 Colin McGinn

28/2 TBD

3/3 Exam2 (worth 20%)

Topic 3: the question of free-wills

5/3 TBD

7/3 Peter van Inwagen

10/3 Peter van Inwagen

12/3 Galen Strawson

14/3 Exam 3 (worth 20%)

17/3 midterm break: no class

19/3 midterm break: no class

21/3 midterm break: no class

Topic 4: the question of past and future time

24/3 TBD

26/3 TBD

28/3 TBD

31/3 TBD

2/4 TBD

4/4 TBD

7/4 Course review

April: final exam (worth 40%) (time and date and classrooms TBA)