

PHIL 130 METAPHYSICS

Syllabus

Fall 2015

Instructor: Kerry McKenzie

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Office: HSS 8088

Office Hours: Wednesday 1-3pm or by appointment.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

| <i>Wk: Date</i> | <i>Topic</i> |
|------------------------|---|
| 1: 09/25 | 1. Introduction and Overview |
| 2: 09/28 | 2. Defining 'Realism' (Chaps 2 & 3) |
| 2: 09/30 | 3. Defining 'Realism' (Chaps 2 & 3) |
| 2: 10/02 | 4. Defining 'Realism' (Chaps 2 & 3) |
| 3: 10/05 | 5. Defining 'Realism' (Chaps 2 & 3)) |
| 3: 10/07 | 6. Defining 'Realism' (Chaps 2 & 3) |
| 3: 10/09 | 7. Defining 'Realism' (Chaps 2 & 3) |
| 4: 10/12 | 8. Colours (Chap 7) |
| 4: 10/14 | 9. Colours (Chap 7) |
| 4: 10/16 | 10. Colours (Chap 7) |
| 5: 10/19 | 11. Moral Properties (Chap 8, omit 8.7.1, 8.10 + supplements) |
| 5: 10/21 | 12. NO CLASS |
| 5: 10/23 | 13. Moral Properties (Chap 8, omit 8.7.1, 8.10 + supplements) |
| 6: 10/26 | 14. Moral Properties (Chap 8, omit 8.7.1, 8.10 + supplements) |
| 6: 10/28 | 15. Review |
| 6: 10/30 | 16. Essay trouble shooting |
| | Paper due Nov 2nd |
| 7: 11/02 | 17. Unobservable Entities (Chap 9) |
| 7: 11/04 | 18. Unobservable Entities (Chap 9) |
| 7: 11/06 | 19. Unobservable Entities (Chap 9) |
| 8: 11/09 | 20. Numbers (Chap 10 / IEP) |
| 8: 11/11 | 21. NO CLASS – Veteran's Day |
| 8: 11/13 | 22. Numbers (Chap 10 / IEP) |
| 9: 11/16 | 23. Numbers (Chap 10 / IEP) |
| 9: 11/18 | 24. Review |
| 9: 11/20 | 25. Race (Ney / Haslanger) |
| 10: 11/23 | 26. Race (Ney / Haslanger) |
| 10: 11/25 | 27. Race (Ney / Haslanger) |
| 10: 11/27 | 28. NO CLASS – Thanksgiving |
| 11: 11/30 | 29. Fictional Characters (Chap 12) |
| 11: 12/02 | 30. Fictional Characters (Chap 12) |
| 11: 12/04 | 31. Review |
| 10: 12/08 Exam. | |

Exam: December 8th.

1 Objectives, methods, requirements

1.1 What this course is about

This course concerns a fundamental question of philosophy: *what is real?* We will approach this question in bite-sized chunks, looking variously at colors, moral properties, unobservable scientific entities, races, numbers, possible worlds and fictional characters. By the end of the course, you should have a grasp of the stock strategies that philosophers use to argue about these topics, and an opinion of your own about a handful of them.

1.2 Objectives

On completion of this module students should be able to articulate the notion of realism in philosophy, have an understanding of some of the subtleties involved, and have a view on whether we ought to be realists about two or three types of entity.

1.3 Assessment

There are four parts to your assessment.

- Eight sets of structured questions, each worth 2%. (*NB: we may end up doing only 6 or 7. If so we'll make up the missing marks in the exam.*)
- ~~Monday Nov 2nd~~ **FRIDAY NOV 6TH**: paper of around 1,500 words [ie 1,500 +/- 10%] (35%).
- Tuesday Dec 8th: exam (49%).

Structured questions. These will consist of a few questions designed to help you develop your view. **Bring hard copies of these to class on specified days** (as I will announce in class). Not being there to hand it in results in a 1 mark penalty. The full 2 marks will be given to each completed assignment you turn in. It is fine (and encouraged) to modify (even if it means scribbling all over) your answer sheet in class.

Paper. Your paper should be about 1,500 words long – ie between about 1,250 and 1,750 words – and should be submitted in class on **Nov 6th**. You will be asked to write an essay discussing one of the topics we have looked at (colours, moral properties, and scientific entities).

Exam. You will be asked to write an essay on one of the topics covered since the last paper, plus an essay bringing two topics into contact with each other, *at least one of which must not have been covered in either your previous essay or the term paper*. As such, from all the topics that we will look at, you should acquaint yourself with at least *three*.

In class we will discuss the sort of thing I'm looking for you in your term paper and exam essays. But in a nutshell I will be looking for three things, weighted roughly equally:

Comprehension: understanding of the concepts and ideas discussed in the essay.

Clarity: presentation of the ideas and concepts in a clear and concise manner.

Engagement: independent thinking about the items under discussion. *For top marks, you need to go a step beyond the material explicitly covered in class.*

You must submit both a hard copy of your paper to me in class as well as submit it through Turnitin, via a link on TED.

Grading scale. Your TAs will be assigning letter grades for your exam and term paper corresponding to these marks:

| | | | |
|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| $97 - 100 = A^+$ | $87 - 89 = B^+$ | $77 - 79 = C^+$ | $67 - 69 = D^+$ |
| $93 - 96 = A$ | $83 - 86 = B$ | $73 - 76 = C$ | $60 - 66 = D$ |
| $90 - 92 = A^-$ | $80 - 82 = B^-$ | $70 - 72 = C^-$ | $< 60 = F$ |

The final letter grade you receive however will be ‘graded to the curve’, so that the top 20-25% of students will get a grade in the A range, the next 25-35% a grade in the B range, the next 25-30% a grade in the C range, and the remaining 5-25% a D or an F. This is the minimum I guarantee; if the class has worked well and no-one deserves a D or an F, the curve will be adjusted accordingly.

Academic Integrity.

UCSD is committed to academic integrity. According to their *Policy on Integrity of Scholarship*,¹

“Integrity of scholarship is essential for an academic community. The University expects that both faculty and students will honor this principle and in so doing protect the validity of University intellectual work. For students, this means that all academic work will be done by the individual to whom it is assigned, without unauthorized aid of any kind.”

If you are unsure in any way of what acting with integrity demands of you in this context, I’ll be happy to discuss it with you.

Set reading. Our coursebook will be *Realism and Anti-Realism* by Stuart Brock and Edwin Mares. (We will be omitting chapters 4-6.) The book is difficult – in some places, unnecessarily so – and is by no means perfect. Thus DO NOT HESITATE to raise in class anything in the reading that was unclear to you: it will be helpful for me too, and probably everyone else as well.

You are encouraged to use the *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* to find additional reading on whatever topic it is that you have chosen to write about. In some cases, the (more advanced) *Stanford Encyclopedia* will be useful too: I will advise you on that in class. Do not hesitate to get in touch for any advice on reading.

Office hours. I run office hours Friday 1-3pm in H& SS 8088. Please look at office hour as another resource available to you. If that time does not suit your schedule, don’t hesitate to get in touch to try and arrange a time that does.

¹For the full statement, go to <https://students.ucsd.edu/academics/academic-integrity/policy.html>