

# Space, Time, and Reality — PHIL 3700

Fall 2022

**Professor:** Yanssel Garcia

Email: yansselgarcia@unomaha.edu

Class times: Mondays and Wednesdays; 4:00 p.m. to 5:15 p.m.

Classroom: Arts and Sciences Hall — Room 378

Office hours: Tue, 2:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. (Room: ASH 200C)

## Course Description

Questions about the nature of space and time—or the nature of reality more generally—are questions that fall within the domain of *metaphysics*. Metaphysics is concerned with *what there is* and *what it's like*. While a comprehensive definition of the subject can be difficult to provide, perhaps the most straightforward thing to say is that metaphysics is concerned with *fundamental* reality. As such, metaphysical questions are quite easy to identify. For example: what is time, and how should we understand our passage through it?; what is an object, how is it related to its parts, and what relationship does it bear to its properties?; what does it mean for an object to change?; what is space, and how does it relate to time?; are physical laws necessarily deterministic, and, if so, to what extent can we truly be said to be free?

In this course, we will address these questions. As will become quickly apparent, reality is exceedingly difficult to make sense of, and much of what we take for granted can rarely withstand rational scrutiny.

## Course Objective

The objective of this course is to help students engage with difficult metaphysical questions. This, in turn, requires that students learn how to approach said questions, how to let go of previously held intuitions, how to accept the lack of a clear answer, and how to formulate plausible metaphysical theories.

## Grading, Assignments, and Policies

Here is the assignment breakdown for the course:

Discussions: 10%

First essay: 15%

Second essay: 25%

Midterm exam: 20%

Final exam: 30%

## **Attendance**

Attendance in this course is mandatory. Sometimes, life gets in the way and unforeseen circumstances can make attending class impossible. In these instances, be sure to let me know what the emergency is and that you won't be able to attend. Note that a lack of attendance will hurt your grade.

## **Discussions**

Every week, you will be expected to contribute to the posted discussion board. Your contributions are graded on a pass/fail basis. I will offer you greater detail in class.

## **Essays**

You will have two essays in this course. You will be provided with a set of prompts to choose from, and you will be expected to defend a position. Doing so will require familiarity with the given topics and a good deal of faithful exposition.

Essays **must** meet the following standards:

- Double-spaced
- Written in size 12 font
- Standard one-inch margins
- 1600 words

## **Exams**

The midterm and final exam will be comprehensive tests of your understanding of the material we have covered throughout the course. The exams are worth a sizeable chunk of your grade, so I strongly recommend that you study for them. The exams are not cumulative.

## **Submitting Assignments**

Everything will be submitted via Canvas.

## **Lateness Policy**

Assignments that are submitted in late will suffer a penalty of five points per day. Thus, if the work you submit deserves 48 out of 50 points, it shall receive 43 out of 50 points if late by one day, 38 out of 50 points if late by two, etc. Please submit things on time.

## **Office Hours and Email Policy**

You don't need an appointment to come to my office hours; you're always welcome. You're also generally welcome to email me whenever you'd like with any questions you may have. I'll do my best to respond in a timely manner; it almost always takes me under 24 hours to respond. That being said, if I haven't gotten back to you, don't be afraid to email me again. Really, it's not a bother at all, and it's possible that your first email just got buried.

## **Course Materials**

There is one text that you are required to have for this course:

A Survey of Metaphysics — E. J. Lowe

You should find this text available at the bookstore. All other readings will be uploaded to Canvas. If the assigned reading is from your text, I'll place '(SoM)' next to it in the schedule below.

## **Syllabus Policy**

This syllabus is a flexible document that is subject to change over time. I will *always* let you know ahead of time if I intend on making any changes. I promise not to surprise you.

## **Accessibility Services**

Reasonable accommodations are provided for students who are registered with Accessibility Services Center (ASC) and make their requests sufficiently in advance. For more information, contact ASC (Location: HK 104, Phone: 402.554.2872, Email: [unoaccessibility@unomaha.edu](mailto:unoaccessibility@unomaha.edu).)

## **Academic Integrity**

Plagiarism or cheating of any form will not be tolerated. All of the work you submit must be your own, and instances of academic dishonesty will result in severe penalties. UNO has an academic integrity policy and procedures available at:

<https://www.unomaha.edu/student-life/student-conduct-and-community-standards/policies/academic-integrity.php>

I ask that you please take the academic integrity policy seriously. Proceedings for cases of plagiarism are arduous, and the consequences can be as severe as expulsion from the University. It's not worth the risk. If you find yourself struggling with the material, reach out to me; I am always happy to help out.

## Part One

### Introduction

Aug 22nd	—	Syllabus and Introduction Readings: <i>None</i>
Aug 24th	—	Class Canceled
Aug 29th	—	Class Canceled
Aug 31st	—	Metaphysical Questions Readings: <i>Chapter 1 (SoM)</i>

## Part Two

### Objects and Properties

Sep 5th	—	<b>Labor Day</b> <i>No Class</i>
Sep 7th	—	Universals and Particulars Readings: <i>Chapter 19 (SoM)</i>
Sep 12th	—	Simples Readings: <i>Markosian, "Simples"</i> <i>McDaniel, "Extended Simples"</i>
Sep 14th	—	Objects are Weird Readings: <i>Chapter 20 (SoM)</i>
Sep 19th	—	Bundling Properties Readings: <i>Van Cleve, "Three Versions of the Bundle Theory"</i>

## Part Three

### Identity and Possibility

Sep 21st	—	Necessity and Possibility Readings: <i>Chapter 5 (SoM)</i>
----------	---	---

Sep 26th — Essential Properties  
Readings: *Chapter 6 (SoM)*

## Part Four Space and Time

Sep 28th — Space is Weird  
Readings: *Chapter 14 (SoM)*

Oct 3rd — The Nature of Space  
Readings: *Chapter 15 (SoM)*

Oct 5th — A Difficult Puzzle  
Readings: *Black, "The Identity of Indiscernibles"*  
*Rodriguez-Pereyra, "The Bundle Theory is Compatible..."*  
***First Essay Assigned***

Oct 10th — Paradoxes  
Readings: *Chapter 16 (SoM)*

Oct 12th — Time is Weird  
Readings: *Chapter 17 (SoM)*

---

### Semester Break

October 17th - October 18th

*Itty Bitty Break*

---

Oct 19th — Time and Change  
Readings: *Shoemaker, "Time without Change"*  
***First Essay Due***

Oct 24th — Time Travel  
Readings: *Chapter 18 (SoM)*

Oct 26th — Midterm Review  
Readings: *Everything*

Oct 31st — **Midterm Exam**  
*You've got this*

## Part Five

### Persistence, Change, and Coincidence

Nov 2nd — The Ship of Theseus  
Readings: *Chapter 2 (SoM)*

Nov 7th — Stretched in Time  
Readings: *Chapter 3 (SoM)*

Nov 9th — Coinciding Objects  
Readings: *Chapter 4 (SoM)*

## Part Six

### Causation

Nov 14th — Causation  
Readings: *Lewis, "Causation"*

Nov 16th — Qualities and Dispositions  
Readings: *Prior, Pargetter, and Jackson, "Three Theses about Dispositions"*

Nov 21st — Finks and Counterfactuals  
Readings: *Martin, "Dispositions and Conditionals"*  
***Second Essay Assigned***

---

## Thanksgiving Break

### November 23rd - November 27th

*Turkey Time*

---

Nov 28th — Powerful Qualities  
Readings: *Heil, "Dispositions"*

## Part Seven

### Free Will

- Nov 30th — Freedom of Will  
Readings: *Van Inwagen, "When Is the Will Free?"*
- Dec 5th — Determinism, Free Will, and Responsibility  
Readings: *Frankfurt, "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility"*  
*Strawson, "The Impossibility of Moral Responsibility"*
- Dec 7th — Final Review  
Readings: *Everything*
- Dec 9th — **Second Essay Due**

### **Final Exam**

Monday, December 12th

5:00 p.m.