

PHL 242/442: Metaphysics
Tuesdays and Thursdays 3:25-4:40pm
Dewey 2110-E

Instructor: Professor Ney
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Office Hours: Tuesdays, 10:00am - noon

This course will examine several topics in contemporary metaphysics related to ontology, modality, and the nature of time.

No prior knowledge of metaphysics will be required, but students will be expected to have already taken courses in philosophy.

Texts:

There are two required books for this course available at the bookstore:

Peter van Inwagen. *Material Beings*. Cornell University Press, 1990.
Saul Kripke. *Naming and Necessity*. Harvard University Press, 1980.

All other readings are available online through Blackboard. To access them, please go to my.rochester.edu and log in using your NetID and password.

Grading:

Assessment in this course will be on the basis of weekly written assignments (of approximately 2 pages each), a term paper, and two exams. Attendance is mandatory.

I. Weekly Assignments

Students are responsible to submit, over the course of the semester, five written discussion pieces of approximately 2 pages each (double spaced) on assigned questions. (Those students enrolled in 242W will be required to submit seven.)

Assignments will be graded on a satisfactory/unsatisfactory basis. These will be turned in electronically by Tuesday at noon, and will under no circumstances be submitted late. Satisfactory completion of these written assignments will be worth 20% of your final grade.

II. Term Paper

All students enrolled in this class are required to turn in one term paper. Students will have a choice of topics on which to write. For those undergraduates enrolled in the class (and not enrolled in 242W), papers will be 6-8 pages in length, comparing two of the positions we have considered, and critically evaluating the debate. Graduate students will prepare 10-12 page critical essays. All papers will be due electronically April 30. Please note my policy on late papers: for each 24 hours the paper is late, 5 points will be

deducted. This assignment will be worth 30% of your final grade.

For those students enrolled in 242W, you will turn in a rough draft of your essay no later than Thursday, April 23. This draft will be worth 10% of your final grade. The final version, which should be 10-12 pages, will be due Thursday, May 7 and will be worth 20% of your final grade.

III. Examinations

Lastly, students will take two exams over the course of the semester: a midterm and a final. Study guides will be handed out in advance. The midterm will be held in class on Thursday, February 19. The final will be held on Saturday, May 9 at 8:30am. Please make a note these dates now and plan your travel arrangements accordingly. I will not be offering makeup exams. Each exam will be worth 25% of your final grade.

Topics and Assigned Readings:

I. Introduction to Ontology: Abstract Entities

- Plato, excerpts from *Republic*
- Aristotle, *Metaphysics* Book I, Part 9
- Julia Annas, *An Introduction to Plato's Republic*, Ch. 9
- David Armstrong, excerpt from *Universals: An Opinionated Introduction*
- W.V.O. Quine, On What There Is
- Zoltán Szabó, Nominalism
- Frank Jackson, Statements About Universals

II. The Debate over Metaphysics in the Twentieth Century

- Rudolf Carnap, Empiricism, Semantics, and Ontology
- A.J. Ayer, excerpt from *Logical Positivism*
- Saul Kripke, *Naming and Necessity*

III. Ontology II: Material Objects

- Peter van Inwagen, *Material Beings* pp.17-114
- Ned Markosian, Brutal Composition
- Cian Dorr and Gideon Rosen, Composition as a Fiction

IV. Philosophy of Time

- Theodore Sider, Against Presentism
- Ned Markosian, A Defense of Presentism
- David Lewis, The Paradoxes of Time Travel