

Advanced Metaphysics
Philosophy 415
Spring 2020
TTh 1:10-2:30

Professor Karen Bennett

kbennett@philosophy.rutgers.edu

106 Somerset St. #534

Office hours: Tuesday afternoons by appointment

Required Text

What is a Law of Nature?, David Armstrong

All other readings will be made available via Canvas.

Recommended Text:

Universals: an Opinionated Introduction, David Armstrong. Find a used copy—new ones are overpriced.

Optional extras:

Readings on Laws of Nature, ed. John Carroll

Properties, eds. D. H. Mellor and Alex Oliver (Oxford Readings in Philosophy)

Causation, eds. Ernest Sosa and Michael Tooley (Oxford Readings in Philosophy)

Causation and Counterfactuals, eds. Laurie Paul, Ned Hall, and John Collins

Online Resources:

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy:

<http://plato.stanford.edu>

Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy:

<http://www.rep.routledge.com>

The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy:

<http://www.oxfordreference.com>

You must cite these resources if you use them for papers.

Assessment:

Note: this is a 400-level class. A large part of your grade is determined by 2 papers; be prepared to put work into them. Another large part of your grade is determined by homework and participation. You cannot dial out of this class and still receive a good grade.

• Papers: 60%

Two papers, roughly 10 pages long, worth 30% each. (Normal font size and margins.) Each paper will be accompanied by two preliminary exercises, one mandatory and one optional.

Mandatory pre-writes: due a few days after the topics are handed out (due dates marked on syllabus). They will not themselves be graded, but failure to turn one in will result in 1/3 letter grade penalty on the paper itself.

Optional peer review: Those who want to participate will be assigned (or choose) partners, and will turn in a draft roughly a week after the paper topics are handed out (due dates on syllabus). You will have several days to complete a peer review worksheet on your partner's paper, and will receive the same worksheet on your own draft. You will then have several more days to revise your paper in light of the feedback you receive. Peer review worksheets will not themselves be graded, though I will check that a good faith effort was made. Students putting in genuine effort at the peer review exercise will receive an automatic 1/3 letter grade bonus on their paper grade.

- Homework: 20%

A brief homework assignment will be due every Wednesday by 10 PM. These should be roughly a paragraph, and won't be graded. Your homework grade will be based on the percentage of assignments you have completed.

- Participation: 20%

I expect you to come to class having done the reading, and prepared to discuss the material I present.

Policy Notes

1. I do grant extensions on papers, but you have to talk to me in advance. If you do not make arrangements beforehand, late papers will be downgraded by 1/3 letter grade per day.
2. Each student is required to adhere to Rutgers' Academic Integrity Policy:
<http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-at-rutgers/>
It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with this policy, and what constitutes a violation of it. All work must be your own, and all sources must be properly cited.

Use of Canvas Software

I will use Canvas to send occasional e-mails, and to post paper topics and homework questions. You will submit your answers to homework questions via Canvas as well.
<https://rutgers.instructure.com/login/canvas>

Questions about Canvas? <https://canvas.rutgers.edu/students/getting-started-in-canvas-students/>

Tentative Schedule of Readings

0. Introduction

- 1/21 Hume, excerpt from *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Book VII, 2
Hume, excerpt from *An Abstract of a Treatise of Human Nature*
Lewis, excerpt from introduction to *Philosophical Papers Volume II*

1. Laws of Nature

1.1 Armstrong's Assault on the Naïve Regularity Theory

1/23 Armstrong, *What is a Law of Nature?*, chapters 1 and 2

1/28 Armstrong, *What is a Law of Nature?*, chapter 2 and 3

1/30 no class

2/4 Armstrong, *What is a Law of Nature?*, chapter 4

1.2 The Best Systems Theory (and Armstrong's objections)

2/6 Lewis, *Counterfactuals*, pp. 73-74

Lewis, excerpt from "Postscript C" to "Subjectivist's Guide to Objective Chance," 122-124

Lewis, p. 215-216 only of "New Work for a Theory of Universals" (i.e., the beginning of the section titled "Laws and Causation")

Lewis, p. 478-480 only of "Humean Supervenience Debugged"

Hall, §§17.1-17.4 of "Humean Reductionism about Laws of Nature"

2/11 Armstrong, *What is a Law of Nature?*, chapter 5, §4

Loewer, pp. 187-194 of “Humean Supervenience” (the section called, “Are the L-Laws the Laws?”—rest is optional)
Lange, sections 2.3 and 2.4 from *Laws and Lawmakers*
Hall, few paragraphs from his review of Lange’s book

1.3 Armstrong’s View: Necessitation amongst Universals

2/13 Armstrong, *What is a Law of Nature?*, chapter 6 (skip §5 & 8)

2/18 Lewis, p. 213-214 of “New Work for a Theory of Universals”
Lewis, p. xii of introduction to *Philosophical Papers Volume II*
Optional: Schaffer, “It Is in the Business of Laws to Govern,” §§1-3

2/20 no class

2/21 (Friday) Paper #1 prewrite due

1.4 Where shall we stand?

2/25 Beebe, “The Non-Governing Conception of Laws of Nature”

Optional further reading on laws: Lange, *Laws and Lawmakers*; Maudlin, *The Metaphysics within Physics*; van Fraassen, *Laws and Symmetry*; Ellis, *Causal Essentialism*; John Carroll, *Laws of Nature*; John Carroll, ed., *Readings on Laws of Nature*

2. *Properties*

2/27 **Paper #1 drafts due for those participating in peer review**

Plato, excerpt from *The Republic* book X

Armstrong, *Universals: An Opinionated Introduction*, pp. 1-14 (end of section II)
reread Armstrong, *What is a Law of Nature?*, chapter 6, §2

3/3 **Peer review worksheets due**

Quine, “On What There Is”

3/5 Armstrong, *Universals: An Opinionated Introduction*, chapter 2

Lewis, “Modal Realism at Work: Properties”

3/10 **Paper #1 due** Armstrong, *Universals: An Opinionated Introduction*, chapter 3

3/12 Lewis, “New Work for a Theory of Universals” sections 1-3

Spring break

3/24 Shoemaker, “Causality and Properties”

Armstrong, *What is a Law of Nature?*, chapter 11 §1

3/26 continued

3. *Causation*

3/31 Lewis, “Causation,” §1

4/2 Lewis, “Causation,” the rest

Lewis, “Counterfactual Dependence and Time’s Arrow,” start at p. 41 (“analysis 2”) and read through p.48 (finish the section titled “The Future Similarity Objection”)

- Collins, Hall, and Paul, sections 0 and 1 of the Introduction to *Causation and Counterfactuals*
- 4/7 Lewis, "Postscripts", section E
*Optional: *Collins, Hall, and Paul, section 4 of the Introduction to Causation and Counterfactuals, Horwich, "Lewis' Programme", Kim, "Causes and Counterfactuals", *Schaffer, "Trumping preemption"*
- 4/9 continued
- 4/14 Lewis, "Postscripts", section D
 Lewis, "Void and Object" sections 1, 2, and 5 (rest optional),
 Beebee, "Causing and Nothingness"
Optional: Dowe, "A Counterfactual Theory of Prevention and 'Causation' by Omission"; Sara Bernstein, "Omissions as Possibilities"
- 4/16 Paper #2 pre-writes due**
 McGrath, "Causation by Omission: a Dilemma"
Optional: Thomson, "Causation: Omissions"
- 4/21 Mackie, "Causing, Delaying, and Hastening: Do Rains Cause Fires?"
- 4/23 Paper 2 drafts due for those participating in peer review
 no class**
- 4/28 Paper 2 peer review worksheets due**
 continued
- 4/30 Beebee, "Does Anything Hold the Universe Together?"
 Armstrong, "Going Through the Open Door Again"
Optional: Strawson, "Realism and Causation," Tooley, "Causation: Reductionism vs. Realism" particularly §3-6 (section 2 rehearses arguments against Humeanism about laws of nature); Schaffer, "Causation and Laws of Nature: Reductionism"

Paper #2 due by 05/05 at 5 PM. No extensions past 8 AM May 8th (when the final would be, as scheduled by the registrar)