Phil 215: Introduction to Metaphysics

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Time and Location: TF 2 in FH B3 CAC
Office Hours: Fridays after class, #246, 5th flr., 106 Somerset St.

Course Description:

Broadly speaking, metaphysics is the study of the most general and abstract features of reality. It investigates and analyses the structure of reality, in doing so, it aims at insights of the highest generality. In this course, we will consider a variety of topics in contemporary analytic metaphysics, including, for example, *existence*, *events*, and *mereology*.

Required Text: *Metaphysics: Contemporary Readings*, by Steven D. Hales
ISBN: 0534551459

Undergraduate Learning Outcomes

As a result of fully participating in this class, students will be able to:

a) Understand the key theories and concepts involved in contemporary metaphysics.
b) Critically examine how these theories pertain to more general philosophical debates.
c) Summarize, write and verbalize key theories and concepts studied.

Expectations for All Students

1) Commit to attending each class session
2) Be prepared to discuss assigned readings and engage positively in class activities;
3) Be willing to examine and share their own issues and experiences;
4) Be respectful of different perspectives offered by classmates and professor
5) Complete assignments and participate in weekly class discussions

Schedule of Topics and Readings

The class is (roughly speaking) composed of a series of lectures and discussion periods that work through the chapters of our text in the given order, covering the following topics in Metaphysics:

1. Existence
2. Realism/Antirealism
3: Truth

4: Abstracta: properties, numbers, and propositions

5: Secondary Qualities: Color

6: Events

7: Concreta: Substance

8: Dependent Particulars: holes, boundaries, and surfaces

9: Mereology

Grading:

30 %: Weekly answers to study questions, due on Sakai by 5pm Monday evening.
25 %: First paper (4-6 pages), due March
35 %: Final paper (8-10 pages), due May
10 %: Participation, attention, and attitude: see "student expectations", above.

Late Submission Policy

Late submissions of weekly study questions will not be accepted, period. Late submissions of papers carry letter grade penalties.

Attendance Policy

Attendance is mandatory. You may miss a total of two classes (excuse or unexcused). After that, regardless of the reason, your final grade will be affected.

Study Questions

10 Weekly Homework Responses to Study Questions (SQs): 100 points per set. The questions are located on Sakai, in the assignments folder. **UPLOAD your answers to Sakai the day before class by 5pm** (Monday evening). Late HW not accepted, period.

My questions are designed to help you read and comprehend the assignments, and almost always need more than just a simple "yes" or "no" response. Typical SQ answers range from one to three paragraphs each.

Since the questions are designed to make sure you've read and comprehended the research for that week, savvy students will make sure their responses properly reflect the readings (e.g., using quotes or page numbers to support your answers, making sure your answers adequately paraphrase the readings involved). Basically: the more your answers show you actually READ and UNDERSTOOD the research, the better your grade is likely to be.

SQ grades will be given as follows

0 – 64=	Unacceptable—posts that are regularly given this grade MUST be improved if you want to pass this course
65 =	Unsatisfactory – posts regularly given this grade should be improved
75 =	Satisfactory – are you expecting a B in this course?! Then improvement is needed!
85 =	Good – equivalent to a solid B average; however, if you were expecting a 95, you'll have to put in more effort (consult our Sakai page for examples of A caliber work)
95 =	Excellent; equivalent to a solid A
100 =	Brilliant, original, insightful, and thorough work!

Academic Support

Any typed HW submission that has more than 5 grammatical/spelling errors will be docked 5 points off the final grade for that assignment. If this kind of thing is preventing you from obtaining the grade you want, then you really ought to contact the writing support services offered at Rutgers, which are free of charge:

Writing Assistance http://lrc.rutgers.edu/content/writing-assistance

Plagiarism:

What is plagiarism? Many students have heard the classic definition—i.e., using someone else's work without citing it. BUT, plagiarism ALSO includes:
- Re-arranging an author's words (paraphrasing) and using it without citing.
- Using someone else's ideas without citing the source.
- Submitting the same paper for two different assignments, without clearing it with the professor, *first.*

In order to avoid plagiarism:

- Paraphrase the data without looking at the text you are using: this is the best way to ensure you are not plagiarizing—if you can state what the author is saying without having to look at it, then you have truly understood it.

Always Cite the following (author and page number or web link is fine for this class):

- Direct quotes
- Paraphrased work
- Statistics and data that are not yours

Failure to abide by these guidelines could be considered a violation of Rutgers's Academic Integrity Policy. Please refer to the resources page for more information: http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/resources Anyone guilty of academic dishonesty in this class will receive a FAILING GRADE and be reported to the Dean's office.

Disability Accommodation

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines.