Course Overview

PHIL3020 - METAPHYSICS

Course Outline

Course Coordinator: John Wright
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Email: John.Wright@newcastle.edu.au
Consultation hours: Tue 3-5.

Brief Course Description
Metaphysics is one of the main branches of philosophy. This course surveys the main problems and areas of metaphysics.

Contact Hours
Lecture for 3 Hours per Week for the Full Term

Learning Materials/Texts
All required materials will be placed on Short Loans or on Blackboard

Course Objectives
(1) Impart to students familiarity with, and knowledge of, the main issues addressed and approaches taken by philosophers, specifically in the area of metaphysics.
(2) Impart to students critical skills to deal with these issues and employ these approaches in their assessment of their own culture and societal life, and in thinking about their own personal lives.
(3) Develop high level written and oral skills in analyzing and presenting philosophical issues.
(4) Develop a capacity to appreciate the philosophical positions involved in how people approach ways of living and in their stance to the world around them.

Course Outline Issued and Correct as at: Week 1, Semester 1 - 2009

CTS Download Date: 13.2.09
Course Content
The course covers topics including Realism, the existence of material objects, causation, philosophical problems of space and time, problems of the self, other minds and the nature and existence of moral properties.

Assessment Items

| Essays / Written Assignments | 2 x 3,500 word essays. |

Assumed Knowledge
10 units of PHIL courses at 1000 level, or 40 units of any courses at any level.

Callaghan Campus Timetable
PHIL3020
METAPHYSICS
Enquiries: School of Humanities and Social Science
Semester 1 – 2009
Lecture Monday 10:00 - 13:00 [PG12]

Plagiarism
University policy prohibits students plagiarising any material under any circumstances. A student plagiarises if he or she presents the thoughts or works of another as one's own. Without limiting the generality of this definition, it may include:

- copying or paraphrasing material from any source without due acknowledgment;
- using another's ideas without due acknowledgment;
- working with others without permission and presenting the resulting work as though it was completed independently.

Plagiarism is not only related to written works, but also to material such as data, images, music, formulae, websites and computer programs.

Aiding another student to plagiarise is also a violation of the Student Academic Integrity Policy and may invoke a penalty.

For further information on the University policy on plagiarism, please refer to the Policy on Student Academic Integrity at the following link -


The University uses an electronic text matching system called Turnitin. When you submit assessment items please be aware that for the purpose of assessing any assessment item the University may -

- Reproduce this assessment item and provide a copy to another member of the University; and/or
- Communicate a copy of this assessment item to a text matching service (which may then retain a copy of the item on its database for the purpose of future checking).
- Submit the assessment item to other forms of plagiarism checking

Written Assessment Items
Students may be required to provide written assessment items in electronic form as well as hard copy.
Marks and Grades Released During Term

All marks and grades released during the term, are indicative only until formally approved by the Head of School on the recommendation of the School Assessment body.

Extension of Time for Assessment Items, Deferred Assessment and Special Consideration for Assessment Items or Formal Written Examinations

Students are required to submit assessment items by the due date, as advised in the Course Outline, unless the Course Coordinator approves an extension of time for submission of the item. University policy is that an assessment item submitted after the due date, without an approved extension, will be penalised.

Any student:

1. who is applying for an extension of time for submission of an assessment item on the basis of medical, compassionate, hardship/trauma or unavoidable commitment; or

2. whose attendance at or performance in an assessment item or formal written examination has been or will be affected by medical, compassionate, hardship/trauma or unavoidable commitment;

must report the circumstances, with supporting documentation, to the appropriate officer following the instructions provided in the Special Circumstances Affecting Assessment Procedure - Policy 000641.

Note: different procedures apply for minor and major assessment tasks.

Please go to the Policy at http://www.newcastle.edu.au/policylibrary/000641.html, for further information, particularly for information on the options available to you.

Students should be aware of the following important deadlines:

- **Requests for Special Consideration** must be lodged no later than 3 working days after the due date of submission or examination.

- **Requests for Extensions of Time on Assessment Items** must be lodged no later than the due date of the item.

- **Requests for Rescheduling Exams** must be received no later than ten working days prior the first date of the examination period

Your application may not be accepted if it is received after the deadline. In the first instance, students who are unable to meet the above deadlines due to extenuating circumstances should speak to their Program Officer or their Program Executive if studying in Singapore.

Changing your Enrolment

If students are enrolled after the census dates listed below they are liable for the full cost of their student contribution or fees for that term.

For semester 1 courses: 31 March 2009

For semester 2 courses: 31 August 2009

For Trimester 1 courses: 18 February 2009

For Trimester 2 courses: 9 June 2009

For Trimester 3 courses: 22 September 2009

Singapore Census Dates
Block Census Dates

Block 1: 16 January 2009
Block 2: 13 March 2009
Block 3: 15 May 2009
Block 4: 10 July 2009
Block 5: 11 September 2009
Block 6: 16 November 2009

Students may withdraw from a course without academic penalty on or before the last day of term. Any withdrawal from a course after the last day of term will result in a fail grade.

Students cannot enrol in a new course after the second week of term, except under exceptional circumstances. Any application to add a course after the second week of term must be on the appropriate form, and should be discussed with staff in the Student Hubs or with your Program Executive at PSB if you are a Singapore student.

To check or change your enrolment online, please refer to myHub - Self Service for Students

https://myhub.newcastle.edu.au

Faculty Information

The Student Hubs are a one-stop shop for the delivery of student related services and are the first point of contact for students studying in Australia.

The four Student Hubs are located at:

Callaghan Campus
• Shortland Hub: Level 3, Shortland Building
• Hunter Hub: Level 2, Student Services Centre

City Precinct
• City Hub and Information Common: Ground Floor, University House

Central Coast Campus (Ourimbah)
• Student Hub: Opposite the Main Cafeteria

For Port Macquarie students, contact your program officer or EnquiryCentre@newcastle.edu.au, phone 4921 5000

For Singapore students, your first point of contact is your PSB Program Executive

Faculty websites

Faculty of Business and Law
Faculty of Education and Arts
http://www.newcastle.edu.au/faculty/education-arts/

Faculty of Engineering and Built Environment
http://www.newcastle.edu.au/faculty/engineering/

Faculty of Health
http://www.newcastle.edu.au/faculty/health/

Faculty of Science and Information Technology
http://www.newcastle.edu.au/faculty/science-it/

Contact details

Callaghan, City and Port Macquarie
Phone: 02 4921 5000
Email: EnquiryCentre@newcastle.edu.au

Ourimbah
Phone: 02 4348 4030
Email: EnquiryCentre@newcastle.edu.au

The Dean of Students
Resolution Precinct
Phone: 02 4921 5806
Fax: 02 4921 7151
Email: resolutionprecinct@newcastle.edu.au

Deputy Dean of Students (Ourimbah)
Phone: 02 4348 4123
Fax: 02 4348 4145
Email: resolutionprecinct@newcastle.edu.au

Various services are offered by the University Student Support Unit:

Alteration of this Course Outline

No change to this course outline will be permitted after the end of the second week of the term except in exceptional circumstances and with Head of School approval. Students will be notified in advance of any approved changes to this outline.

Web Address for Rules Governing Undergraduate Academic Awards

Web Address for Rules Governing Postgraduate Academic Awards

Web Address for Rules Governing Professional Doctorate Awards

STUDENTS WITH A DISABILITY OR CHRONIC ILLNESS

The University is committed to providing a range of support services for students with a disability or chronic
illness.

If you have a disability or chronic illness which you feel may impact on your studies, please feel free to discuss your support needs with your lecturer or course coordinator.

Disability Support may also be provided by the Student Support Service (Disability). Students must be registered to receive this type of support. To register please contact the Disability Liaison Officer on 02 4921 5766, or via email at: student-disability@newcastle.edu.au

As some forms of support can take a few weeks to implement it is extremely important that you discuss your needs with your lecturer, course coordinator or Student Support Service staff at the beginning of each semester.

For more information related to confidentiality and documentation please visit the Student Support Service (Disability) website at: www.newcastle.edu.au/services/disability

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End of CTS Entry

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Studentmail and Blackboard: Refer - www.blackboard.newcastle.edu.au/

This course uses Blackboard and studentmail to contact students, so you are advised to keep your email accounts within the quota to ensure you receive essential messages. To receive an expedited response to queries, post questions on the Blackboard discussion forum if there is one, or if emailing staff directly use the course code in the subject line of your email. Students are advised to check their studentmail and the course Blackboard site on a weekly basis.

Important Additional Information

Details about the following topics are available on your course Blackboard site (where relevant). Refer - www.blackboard.newcastle.edu.au/

- Written Assignment Presentation and Submission Details
- Online copy submission to Turnitin
- Return of Assignment
- Student Communication
- Essential Online Information for Students

To be made available on Blackboard:

Essay topics, readings and due dates
Notes for selected parts of the course

(Additional information)

Schedule of Lectures

Week 1.

What is metaphysics?
Historical background and origins of term.
Metaphysics and ontology
Metaphysics as giving us the most general account of reality.

Empiricism and Rationalism
The case for empiricism
The case for rationalism
Unresolved issues
Week 2.
The Existence of Material Objects.
Locke’s Empiricism
Locke on our knowledge of the external world
Primary and secondary qualities
Berkeley’s criticisms of Locke.
Berkeley’s conception of objects
Berkeley’s argument for idealism.

Week 3.
Berkeleyian idealism
Berkeley’s argument for the existence of God.
Criticisms of Berkeley.
G. E. Moore’s argument for an external world.
David Hume on our knowledge of an external world
Hume’s scepticism
Hume on induction.

Week 4.
Problems of causation.
Hume on causal connection.
Alternative accounts of causation:
The “energy flow” account of causation
The counterfactual analysis of causation
Causation and INUS conditions
Causation and explanation. “A” cause and “the” cause.
Causation as an unanalysed primitive

Week 5.
An Introduction to Kant
Why Kant believed in synthetic a priori knowledge
Kant’s answer to the question: “How is synthetic a priori knowledge possible?”
Categories and intuitions
The phenomenal world and the noumenal world
Criticisms of Kant

Week 6.
Philosophical Problems of Space
Absolute versus relational conceptions of space
Relationism about space clarified
Kant’s handedness argument for absolute space
Criticisms of Kant
Nerlich’s knees
The explanatory role of the shape of space.

Week 7.
Philosophical Problems of Time
Is the present moving along the time line?
Absolute versus relational conceptions of time
Can there be time without change?
Shoemaker and Newton-Smith on time without change
Week 8.
The existence of the past and future
Williams on the Myth of Passage
Determinism, free-will and our knowledge of the future
The Einstein/Mellor argument for the existence of the past.

Week 9.
Personal Identity
Descartes' conception of a person
Locke on personal identity. The role of memory
Criticisms of Locke
Hume's scepticism about personal identity
The fission problem
Parfit's response to the fission problem

Week 10.
Personal identity and consciousness
Swinburne on consciousness and personal identity
Swinburne and Kripke
Consciousness based accounts of personal identity

Week 11.
The Status of Morality. Do Moral Properties Exist?
Harman on the role of moral properties in observation
Mackie’s five sceptical arguments
- The argument from relativity

Week 12.
Mackie’s sceptical arguments – continued
- The argument from queerness
- The argument from supervenience
- The epistemological argument
- The argument from the fact that people would believe in moral properties even if they did not exist.
Bambrough on the case for the existence of moral properties
Objectivity without existence

Week 13
Realism and anti-Realism
What is Realism?
Existence not the central issue
The notion of independent existence
Constructivism
Relativism
“Irrealism”