

PHL 331: Metaphysics

Spring 2018

Instructor: Adam Murray
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Lectures: Mondays and Wednesdays, 12–1:30 p.m., AB 114.

1 Course Description

Welcome to Philosophy 331: Metaphysics.

Our focus this term will be on the contrasting metaphysical frameworks developed by three very influential philosophers: David Lewis, David Armstrong, and Kit Fine. Among other topics, over the course of the term we shall discuss the views of Lewis, Armstrong, and Fine on modality, fundamentality, the laws of nature, the nature of particulars, properties, and instantiation, the individuation of objects, and the nature of time. A running theme throughout the course will be the distinctive methodological presuppositions concerning the nature of metaphysical inquiry that each of Lewis, Armstrong, and Fine bring to bear on these and other core questions of metaphysics.

As a student in the course, you may expect to come away with a broad understanding of three very different and yet equally comprehensive approaches to a number of central metaphysical topics.

2 Course Texts

There is one required text for the course:

Armstrong, David. *A World of States of Affairs*. Cambridge Studies in Philosophy; Cambridge UP: 1997.

Copies of Armstrong's book should be available shortly in the U of T bookstore. Please ensure you have access to a copy of Armstrong's book by the end of January, when we will begin our lectures on Armstrong.

All other required and recommended readings for the course will be made available to you online through the course Blackboard page.

3 Course Evaluation

Your grade in the course will be calculated on the basis of the following criteria:

1. An in-class test, to be held on **March 7th**, worth 15% of your final grade.
2. Two short essays, one each on either Lewis, Armstrong, or Fine, each worth 25% of your final grade. Topics for each essay will be distributed well in advance of the due date in each case. The submission deadlines for these papers are as follows:
 - Lewis: **February 5th**;
 - Armstrong: **March 5th**;
 - Fine: **April 2nd**.
3. A final paper, worth 35% of your final grade, due on **April 4th**. Topics for the final paper will be made available in mid-March.

4 Schedule of Topics and Readings

Here is a schedule of the topics and readings we will be discussing over the course of the term. A “*” indicates that a reading is recommended. Unless otherwise noted, all readings are required reading.

Jan. 8: *Course introduction and overview of Lewis’s metaphysical framework.*

Reading: Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds*, Ch. 1., pp. 1–27; deRosset, “On the Plurality of Worlds, by David Lewis”.

Jan. 10: *Modal Realism.*

Reading: Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds*, Ch. 1., pp. 69–92.

Jan. 15: *Universals and Laws of Nature.*

Reading: Lewis, “New Work for a Theory of Universals.”

Jan. 17: *Time and Counterfactuals.*

Reading: Lewis, “Counterfactual Dependence and Time’s Arrow”; Fine*, “Review of Lewis’s *Counterfactuals*”.

Jan. 22: *Causation I.*

Lewis, “Causation”; Lewis, “Causation as Influence”. Lewis*, “Postscript to “Causation””.

Jan. 24: *Causation II.*

Reading: As per January 22.

Jan. 29: *Lewis’s System.*

Reading: Hall, “**David Lewis’s Metaphysics.**”; Lewis, *Introduction to his Papers in Metaphysics and Epistemology.*

Jan. 31: *Review.*

Feb. 5: *Overview of Armstrong's Metaphysical Framework.*

Reading: Armstrong, *A World of States of Affairs*, Chs. 1 & 2.

First short essay submission deadline (in class).

Feb. 6: *Properties.*

Reading: Armstrong, *A World of States of Affairs*, Chs. 3 & 4; Lewis*, "Against Structured Universals."

Feb. 12: *Individuals.*

Reading: As per February 6th; Armstrong, *A World of States of Affairs*, Ch. 5.

Feb. 14: *States of Affairs.*

Reading: Armstrong, *A World of States of Affairs*, Ch. 8; Armstrong*, *A World of States of Affairs*, Chs. 6 & 7.

Feb. 26: *Modality.*

Reading: Armstrong, *A World of States of Affairs*, Ch. 10; Lewis*, "Armstrong on Combinatorial Possibility"; Wilson*, "What is Hume's Dictum, and Why Believe It?"

Feb. 28: *Causation and Laws.*

Reading: Armstrong, *A World of States of Affairs*, Chs. 14 and 15.

Mar. 5: *The Unity of the World.*

Reading: Armstrong, *A World of States of Affairs*, Ch. 17.

Second short essay submission deadline (in class).

Mar. 7: **In-class test** (covering material from the lectures and lecture handouts on Lewis and Armstrong).

Mar. 12: *Fine on the aims of metaphysics.*

Fine, "What is Metaphysics?"; "Naive Metaphysics".

Mar. 14: *Realism and the Fundamental.*

Reading: As per March 12; Fine, "The Question of Realism". Schaffer*, "On What Grounds What."

Mar. 19: *Fine on Modality I.*

Reading: Fine, "Essence and Modality".

Mar. 21: *Fine on Modality II.*

Reading: Fine, "Necessity and Non-existence".

Topics for final essay posted on course Blackboard page.

Mar. 26: *Fragmentalism I.*

Reading: Fine, “Tense and Reality”; McTaggart*, “The Unreality of Time”.

Mar. 28: *Fragmentalism II.*

Reading: As per March 26th (in this case all required).

Apr. 2: *Fine’s framework.*

Reading: TBA.

Third short essay submission deadline (in class).

Apr. 4: *Review.*

Final essay due (in class).

5 Additional Course Information

1. *Course Contact.* In addition to our regular lectures, I will hold a set of weekly office hours on Wednesdays from 4–5:30 p.m. in JHB 503. Feel free to attend these should you need to speak with me on matters pertaining to the course, or to ask any questions. Outside of class and office hours, the absolute best way to reach me is by email at adam.murray@utoronto.ca.
 - Please note that all email should include “PHL 331” somewhere in the subject-line, and must be sent from your official U of T address.
 - Please note also that I may disregard email that seeks after information readily available on the course syllabus, or by attending class lectures. Otherwise, please allow 24 hours for a response from me.
 - Finally, note that email is not the place to ask substantive philosophical questions about the course material. You should bring these sorts of questions to my office hours, or ask them in class.
2. *Style and formatting of written work.* Your submitted work should conform to a standard formatting and citation style, such as MLA, APA, or Chicago. See [here](#) for examples.
3. *Late Work.* It is important that your work for this course be submitted on time. Late penalties on assigned work are set at 1/3 of a letter grade per day, to a maximum of five days (this includes weekends/holidays), unless accompanied by a documented medical explanation or due to a family emergency. Any work outstanding beyond this point will receive a grade of 0.

6 Further Resources

1. A helpful primer on how to write a good philosophy paper can be found [here](#).
2. *Academic honesty.* As you are undoubtedly aware, using someone else’s ideas without explicit acknowledgement is stealing, and constitutes plagiarism. It is your responsibility to understand the nature of plagiarism, and what to do to avoid it in your writing.

For more information on academic infractions see [here](#).

Note that the common penalty in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences for plagiarism in a written assignment, test, or examination is **F** on the piece of work. For the most serious acts of plagiarism, such as the purchase of an assignment or cheating on a test or examination, the penalty can also include suspension for a period of up to five years from registration in courses taught in a particular department or from all courses taught in this Faculty.

3. *Disability accommodation.* Should you require any accommodations in this course due to a disability, please do not hesitate to communicate this fact to me.

4. *Important Dates.*

Class begins	Jan. 8 th
First essay due	Feb. 5 th (in class)
Second essay due	Mar. 5 th (in class)
In-class test	Mar. 7 th
Course drop date	Mar. 14 th
Third essay due	Apr. 2 th (in class)
Final essay due	Apr. 4 th (in class)