



PHL 358

Metaphysics

S2 External 2015

Dept of Philosophy

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General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff

Dr. Richard Heersmink

richard.heersmink@gmail.com

Credit points

3

Prerequisites

39cp or admission to GDipArts

Corequisites

Co-badged status

Unit description

This unit examines some traditional questions in metaphysics, focusing on questions about the fundamental nature of reality. The first half of the unit is structured around a discussion of time travel. It addresses questions such as: What is the nature of time? Does time flow or is it static? What is causation? Is time travel possible? The second half of the unit is devoted to a critical examination of the metaphysical theory of materialism, which states that everything is ultimately physical in nature. We examine this theory's explanations of colour, consciousness, free will, and value. The unit concludes with a discussion of whether there is, indeed, a single, ultimate reality, or whether a pluralistic view makes more sense.

Important Academic Dates

Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are available at <https://www.mq.edu.au/study/calendar-of-dates>

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

Demonstrate an awareness of central problems in Metaphysics

Understand and analyse arguments in the relevant literature

Critically evaluate these theories and arguments

Develop your own view or perspective through consideration and analysis of the views and arguments presented in the unit, and to present your own views with clarity and rigour

Develop clarity of thought; clarity of verbal expression; clarity of written expression and exposition.

General Assessment Information

Late outlines and papers will, absent an extension from me, lose 2% of the total score per calendar day, to a maximum of 20%. If you need an extension, you *must* request one by email *before* the due date. The short paper and the final paper *must* both be completed to pass the unit.

In philosophy, academic honesty is taken very seriously. Misrepresenting other's work as your own will be grounds for a zero on the assignment in question and, if severe enough, referral to the Faculty Disciplinary Committee. If you have questions about how to properly cite work or how to credit sources, please talk to me and see also the Academic Honesty Policy http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/academic_honesty/policy.html

Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Due
Short Essay	35%	23/9/15
Final essay	45%	20/11/15
Forum	20%	Throughout

Short Essay

Due: **23/9/15**

Weighting: **35%**

You will write a short 2000 word essay on one of the topics discussed during the first half of the course. These topics include causation, free will, laws of nature, personal identity, mental states, and time. Your essay should be submitted online via Turnitin.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Demonstrate an awareness of central problems in Metaphysics
- Understand and analyse arguments in the relevant literature
- Critically evaluate these theories and arguments
- Develop your own view or perspective through consideration and analysis of the views and arguments presented in the unit, and to present your own views with clarity and rigour
- Develop clarity of thought; clarity of verbal expression; clarity of written expression and exposition.

Final essay

Due: **20/11/15**

Weighting: **45%**

You will write a 2500 word essay on one of the topics discussed during the second half of the course. These topics include material objects, artifacts, art, virtual reality, and religion. Your essay should be submitted online via Turnitin.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Demonstrate an awareness of central problems in Metaphysics
- Understand and analyse arguments in the relevant literature
- Critically evaluate these theories and arguments
- Develop your own view or perspective through consideration and analysis of the views and arguments presented in the unit, and to present your own views with clarity and rigour
- Develop clarity of thought; clarity of verbal expression; clarity of written expression and exposition.

Forum

Due: **Throughout**

Weighting: **20%**

Three questions will be posted on the online forum each week. Every student must answer these questions.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Demonstrate an awareness of central problems in Metaphysics
- Understand and analyse arguments in the relevant literature
- Critically evaluate these theories and arguments
- Develop your own view or perspective through consideration and analysis of the views and arguments presented in the unit, and to present your own views with clarity and rigour
- Develop clarity of thought; clarity of verbal expression; clarity of written expression and exposition.

Delivery and Resources

For the first half of this course, we'll use the following textbook. Please buy this book before the course begins.

John W. Carroll and Ned Markosian. (2010). *Introduction to Metaphysics*. Cambridge University Press.

For the second half, we'll use selected articles which will be uploaded on iLearn.

Unit Schedule

Week Topics

1 Course intro, what is metaphysics?

Essential reading: Ch. 1 of Carroll & Markosian (19 pages)

2 Causation

Essential reading: Ch. 2 of Carroll & Markosian (24 pages)

3 Free will

Essential reading: Ch. 3 of Carroll & Markosian (33 pages)

4 Laws of nature

Essential reading: Ch. 4 of Carroll & Markosian (23 pages)

5 Personal identity

Essential reading: Ch. 5 of Carroll & Markosian (29 pages)

6 Mental states

Essential reading: Ch. 6 of Carroll & Markosian (25 pages)

7 Time

Essential reading: Ch. 7 of Carroll & Markosian (24 pages)

Midterm break

8 Material objects

Essential reading: Ch. 8 of Carroll & Markosian (42 pages)

9 Art

Essential reading: Davies, S. (2005). The ontology of art. In J. Levinson (ed.), *The Oxford handbook of aesthetics* (pp. 156-180). Oxford University Press.

10 Artifacts

Essential reading:

- Houkes, W.N. & Vermaas, P. (2009). Artefacts in analytic metaphysics. *Techné*, 13(2), 74-81.
- Kroes, P. & Meijers, A. (2006). The dual-nature of technical artifacts. *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part A*, 37(1), 1-4.

- Heersmink, R. (2014). The metaphysics of cognitive artefacts. *Philosophical Explorations*. DOI: 10.1080/13869795.2014.910310

11 Virtual reality

Essential reading:

- Brey, P. (2014). The physical and social reality of virtual reality. In M. Grimshaw (ed.), *Oxford handbook of virtuality*, (pp. 42-54). Oxford University Press.
- Mooradian, N. (2006). Virtual reality, ontology, and value. *Metaphilosophy*, 37(5), 673-690.

12 Religion

Essential reading:

- Wainwright, W. (2012). Concepts of god. In *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
- Himma, K. (2015). Anselm: Ontological argument for god's existence. In *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

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Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from [Policy Central](#). Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:

Academic Honesty Policy http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/academic_honesty/policy.html

Assessment Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/assessment/policy.html>

Grading Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grading/policy.html>

Grade Appeal Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/gradeappeal/policy.html>

Grievance Management Policy http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grievance_management/policy.html

Disruption to Studies Policy http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/disruption_studies/policy.html *The Disruption to Studies Policy is effective from March 3 2014 and replaces the Special Consideration Policy.*

In addition, a number of other policies can be found in the [Learning and Teaching Category](#) of Policy Central.

Student Code of Conduct

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct: https://students.mq.edu.au/support/student_conduct/

Results

Results shown in *iLearn*, or released directly by your Unit Convenor, are not confirmed as they are subject to final approval by the University. Once approved, final results will be sent to your

student email address and will be made available in [eStudent](#). For more information visit [ask.mq.edu.au](#).

Student Support

Macquarie University provides a range of support services for students. For details, visit <http://students.mq.edu.au/support/>

Learning Skills

Learning Skills (mq.edu.au/learningskills) provides academic writing resources and study strategies to improve your marks and take control of your study.

- [Workshops](#)
- [StudyWise](#)
- [Academic Integrity Module for Students](#)
- [Ask a Learning Adviser](#)

Student Services and Support

Students with a disability are encouraged to contact the [Disability Service](#) who can provide appropriate help with any issues that arise during their studies.

Student Enquiries

For all student enquiries, visit Student Connect at ask.mq.edu.au

IT Help

For help with University computer systems and technology, visit <http://informatics.mq.edu.au/help/>.

When using the University's IT, you must adhere to the [Acceptable Use Policy](#). The policy applies to all who connect to the MQ network including students.

Graduate Capabilities

Creative and Innovative

Our graduates will also be capable of creative thinking and of creating knowledge. They will be imaginative and open to experience and capable of innovation at work and in the community. We want them to be engaged in applying their critical, creative thinking.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Demonstrate an awareness of central problems in Metaphysics
- Understand and analyse arguments in the relevant literature
- Critically evaluate these theories and arguments

- Develop your own view or perspective through consideration and analysis of the views and arguments presented in the unit, and to present your own views with clarity and rigour
- Develop clarity of thought; clarity of verbal expression; clarity of written expression and exposition.

Assessment tasks

- Short Essay
- Final essay
- Forum

Capable of Professional and Personal Judgement and Initiative

We want our graduates to have emotional intelligence and sound interpersonal skills and to demonstrate discernment and common sense in their professional and personal judgement. They will exercise initiative as needed. They will be capable of risk assessment, and be able to handle ambiguity and complexity, enabling them to be adaptable in diverse and changing environments.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Demonstrate an awareness of central problems in Metaphysics
- Understand and analyse arguments in the relevant literature
- Develop your own view or perspective through consideration and analysis of the views and arguments presented in the unit, and to present your own views with clarity and rigour
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Assessment tasks

- Short Essay
- Final essay

Commitment to Continuous Learning

Our graduates will have enquiring minds and a literate curiosity which will lead them to pursue knowledge for its own sake. They will continue to pursue learning in their careers and as they participate in the world. They will be capable of reflecting on their experiences and relationships with others and the environment, learning from them, and growing - personally, professionally and socially.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Demonstrate an awareness of central problems in Metaphysics
- Understand and analyse arguments in the relevant literature
- Critically evaluate these theories and arguments
- Develop your own view or perspective through consideration and analysis of the views and arguments presented in the unit, and to present your own views with clarity and rigour
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- Forum

Discipline Specific Knowledge and Skills

Our graduates will take with them the intellectual development, depth and breadth of knowledge, scholarly understanding, and specific subject content in their chosen fields to make them competent and confident in their subject or profession. They will be able to demonstrate, where relevant, professional technical competence and meet professional standards. They will be able to articulate the structure of knowledge of their discipline, be able to adapt discipline-specific knowledge to novel situations, and be able to contribute from their discipline to inter-disciplinary solutions to problems.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Demonstrate an awareness of central problems in Metaphysics
- Understand and analyse arguments in the relevant literature
- Critically evaluate these theories and arguments
- Develop your own view or perspective through consideration and analysis of the views and arguments presented in the unit, and to present your own views with clarity and rigour
- Develop clarity of thought; clarity of verbal expression; clarity of written expression and exposition.

Assessment tasks

- Short Essay
- Final essay

- Forum

Critical, Analytical and Integrative Thinking

We want our graduates to be capable of reasoning, questioning and analysing, and to integrate and synthesise learning and knowledge from a range of sources and environments; to be able to critique constraints, assumptions and limitations; to be able to think independently and systemically in relation to scholarly activity, in the workplace, and in the world. We want them to have a level of scientific and information technology literacy.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Demonstrate an awareness of central problems in Metaphysics
- Understand and analyse arguments in the relevant literature
- Critically evaluate these theories and arguments
- Develop your own view or perspective through consideration and analysis of the views and arguments presented in the unit, and to present your own views with clarity and rigour
- Develop clarity of thought; clarity of verbal expression; clarity of written expression and exposition.

Assessment tasks

- Short Essay
- Final essay
- Forum

Problem Solving and Research Capability

Our graduates should be capable of researching; of analysing, and interpreting and assessing data and information in various forms; of drawing connections across fields of knowledge; and they should be able to relate their knowledge to complex situations at work or in the world, in order to diagnose and solve problems. We want them to have the confidence to take the initiative in doing so, within an awareness of their own limitations.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Demonstrate an awareness of central problems in Metaphysics
- Understand and analyse arguments in the relevant literature
- Critically evaluate these theories and arguments
- Develop your own view or perspective through consideration and analysis of the views and arguments presented in the unit, and to present your own views with clarity and

rigour

- Develop clarity of thought; clarity of verbal expression; clarity of written expression and exposition.

Assessment tasks

- Short Essay
- Final essay
- Forum

Effective Communication

We want to develop in our students the ability to communicate and convey their views in forms effective with different audiences. We want our graduates to take with them the capability to read, listen, question, gather and evaluate information resources in a variety of formats, assess, write clearly, speak effectively, and to use visual communication and communication technologies as appropriate.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Demonstrate an awareness of central problems in Metaphysics
- Understand and analyse arguments in the relevant literature
- Critically evaluate these theories and arguments
- Develop your own view or perspective through consideration and analysis of the views and arguments presented in the unit, and to present your own views with clarity and rigour
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Disruption to Studies Policy

Disruption to Studies Policy - what is it?

The University recognises that students may experience disruptions that adversely affect their academic performance in assessment activities. Support Services are provided by the University to assist students through their studies. Whilst advice and recommendations may be made to a student, it is ultimately the student's responsibility to access these services as appropriate.

The Disruption to Studies Policy applies only to serious and unavoidable disruptions that arise

after a study period has commenced. The full Disruption to Studies Policy can be found [here](#).

Serious and Unavoidable Disruption: The University classifies a disruption as **serious and unavoidable** if it:

- could not have reasonably been anticipated, avoided or guarded against by the student; and
- was beyond the student's control; and
- caused substantial disruption to the student's capacity for effective study and/or completion of required work; and
- occurred during an event critical study period and was at least three (3) consecutive days duration, and / or
- prevented completion of a final examination.

Students with a pre-existing disability/health condition or prolonged adverse circumstances may be eligible for ongoing assistance and support. Such support is governed by other policies and may be sought and coordinated through [Campus Wellbeing and Support Services](#).

How to submit a Disruption to Studies Notification?

NOTIFICATION The Disruption to Studies Notification must be completed and submitted online through www.ask.mq.edu.au within five (5) working days of the commencement of the disruption. In the situation where a student requires a proxy to submit it on their behalf, this will be taken into account on submission of appropriate evidence as detailed below.

In submitting a Disruption to Studies Notification, a student is acknowledging that they may be required to undertake additional work. The time and date, deadline or format of any required extra assessable work as a result of a Disruption to Studies Notification is not negotiable.

Further, in submitting a Disruption to Studies Notification, a student is agreeing to make themselves available so that they can complete any extra work as required.

VALIDITY Supporting documentation must be submitted within five (5) working days of submitting the Disruption to Studies Notification. Refer to the [Disruption to Studies: Supporting Evidence Schedule](#) for information/examples of supporting documentary evidence relevant to the disruption event(s).

Once supporting documentation has been supplied, a determination of whether the disruption meets the Serious and Unavoidable criteria will commence.

All original documentation submitted regarding the disruption must be retained by the student as this may be requested by the University at any time. In this event, students will be provided 10 business days to submit the original documentation.

WITHDRAWAL OF NOTICE OF DISRUPTION A student may withdraw their Disruption to Studies Notification up to the point where the determination of whether it is Serious and Unavoidable has been made. After this determination, the student may not withdraw the Disruption to Studies Notification and must submit themselves to partake in the assessment activities organised by the Unit Convenor.

Disruptions relating to medical circumstances

Where the particular circumstances pertaining to the disruption are medical in nature, a completed *Professional Authority Form* is required to be submitted with the Disruption to Studies Notification. Medical certificates will not be accepted as supporting documentation.

Refer to the [*Disruption to Studies: Supporting Evidence Schedule*](#) for details regarding the Professional Authority that is relevant to the disruption event. Students can contact staff in [Campus Wellbeing and Support Services](#) for professional guidance on medical circumstances relating to a disruption event or to the completion of a Professional Authority Form.

The University may contact the Registered Health Professional or their practice to verify the authenticity of any *Professional Authority Form* or other supporting information provided or to obtain further information from the Registered Health Professional regarding the impact of the medical condition on the student's ability to complete the assessment task and/or final examination.

Prior conditions

Conditions existing prior to commencing a unit of study are covered by other policies, except in the event of deterioration or exacerbation of the condition. The student is responsible for managing their workload in light of any known or anticipated problems. Students with a pre-existing disability/health condition may contact [Campus Wellbeing and Support Services](#) for information on available support.

Disruptions relating to non-medical circumstances

Where the particular circumstances pertaining to the disruption to studies are non-medical in nature, appropriate supporting evidence indicating the severity (serious / not serious) and impact of the circumstances must be included with the Disruption to Studies Notification as set out in the [*Disruption to Studies: Supporting Evidence Schedule*](#). Details of the actual circumstances are not required to be included if the supporting evidence provides the severity impact of the circumstances.

Academic Performance Academic performance is not a consideration for the determination of whether a disruption is classified as Serious and Unavoidable.