



PHL 358

Metaphysics

S2 Day 2017

Dept of Philosophy

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Disclaimer

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General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff

Richard Heersmink

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Credit points

3

Prerequisites

(39cp at 100 level or above) or admission to GDipArts

Corequisites

Co-badged status

Unit description

This unit examines both traditional topics in metaphysics as well as metaphysical topics in other areas in philosophy. The first half of the unit is structured around traditional topics such as causation, free will, laws of nature, personal identity, mental states, and time. Some of the questions we will look at are: Do we have free will or are our actions determined by the laws of nature? How does the mind relate to the brain? Will my personal identity persist over time? What is the nature of time? Does time flow or is it static? The second half of the unit is devoted to a critical examination of metaphysical topics in other areas in philosophy such as philosophy of art, philosophy of technology, and philosophy of religion. Some of the questions we will look at are: What defines a work of art? How can we distinguish between a work of art and an artifact? What is the nature of virtual entities and how do they differ from physical entities? Does god exist?

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:

Learn basic theories and approaches in metaphysics

Learn to verbally express your opinion and interpretations of philosophical readings

Learn to close-read and evaluate a philosophical text

Learn to write a philosophical argument and essay

Assessment Tasks

| Name | Weighting | Hurdle | Due |
|--|-----------|--------|---------------|
| Essay 1 | 30% | No | 27 September |
| Essay 2 | 40% | No | 12 November |
| Tutorial participation | 15% | No | Throughout |
| Quizzes | 15% | No | Week 4, 8, 12 |

Essay 1

Due: **27 September**

Weighting: **30%**

You will write a short 1500-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 God. In week 8, we'll discuss the outcome of the essays during class, providing elaborate feedback on your essay such that you can avoid common mistakes in your second essay. Your essay should be submitted online via Turnitin. A marking rubric will be provided on iLearn.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Learn basic theories and approaches in metaphysics
- Learn to close-read and evaluate a philosophical text
- Learn to write a philosophical argument and essay

Essay 2

Due: **12 November**

Weighting: **40%**

You will write a 2000-word essay on one of the topics discussed during the second half of the course. These topics include time and time travel, the metaphysics of art, artifacts and virtual reality. Your essay should be submitted online via Turnitin. A marking rubric will be provided on iLearn.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Learn basic theories and approaches in metaphysics
- Learn to close-read and evaluate a philosophical text
- Learn to write a philosophical argument and essay

Tutorial participation

Due: **Throughout**

Weighting: **15%**

For internal students, participation marks will be based on attendance and participation in tutorials. Your participation will be assessed based on your involvement in the classes, and your willingness to engage. A marking rubric will be provided on iLearn. Tutorial attendance is compulsory for internal students, and students who do not attend at least 10 of the 12 tutorials will not receive a mark for participation (unless there are extenuating circumstances).

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Learn basic theories and approaches in metaphysics
- Learn to verbally express your opinion and interpretations of philosophical readings
- Learn to close-read and evaluate a philosophical text

Quizzes

Due: **Week 4, 8, 12**

Weighting: **15%**

Three short online quizzes in which you answer 10 multiple choice questions on the material from week 1-4, 5-8 and 9-12.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Learn basic theories and approaches in metaphysics

Delivery and Resources

We will use the following textbook: Carroll, J.W. & Markosian, N. (2010). An introduction to metaphysics. Cambridge University Press. We will also use philosophical articles that will be uploaded on iLearn.

Unit Schedule

| Week | Topics |
|---|------------------------------------|
| 1 | Course intro, what is metaphysics? |
| Essential reading: Ch. 1 of Carroll & Markosian | |
| 2 | <i>Causation</i> |
| Essential reading: Ch. 2 of Carroll & Markosian | |
| 3 | <i>Free will and determinism</i> |
| Essential reading: Ch. 3 of Carroll & Markosian | |

4 *Laws of nature*

Essential reading: Ch. 4 of Carroll & Markosian

5 *Personal identity*

Essential reading: Ch. 5 of Carroll & Markosian

6 *Mental states*

Essential reading: Ch. 6 of Carroll & Markosian

7 *The metaphysics of God*

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*.

Midterm break

8 *Time*

Essential reading: Ch. 7 of Carroll & Markosian

9 *Time travel*

Essential reading: Nicolas Smith. (2013). Time travel. In *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

10 *The metaphysics of 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.

11 *The metaphysics of 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

12 *The metaphysics of 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.

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_2016.html

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

Complaint Management Procedure for Students and Members of the Public http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/complaint_management/procedure.html

Disruption to Studies Policy (in effect until Dec 4th, 2017): http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/disruption_studies/policy.html

Special Consideration Policy (in effect from Dec 4th, 2017): <https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policies/special-consideration>

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://www.mq.edu.au/about_us/offices_and_units/information_technology/help/.

When using the University's IT, you must adhere to the [Acceptable Use of IT Resources 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

- Learn basic theories and approaches in metaphysics
- Learn to verbally express your opinion and interpretations of philosophical readings
- Learn to close-read and evaluate a philosophical text
- Learn to write a philosophical argument and essay

Assessment tasks

- Essay 1
- Essay 2
- Tutorial participation

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

- Learn basic theories and approaches in metaphysics
- Learn to close-read and evaluate a philosophical text
- Learn to write a philosophical argument and essay

Assessment tasks

- Essay 1
- Essay 2
- Tutorial participation

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

- Learn basic theories and approaches in metaphysics
- Learn to close-read and evaluate a philosophical text
- Learn to write a philosophical argument and essay

Assessment tasks

- Essay 1
- Essay 2
- Tutorial participation

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

- Learn basic theories and approaches in metaphysics

- Learn to verbally express your opinion and interpretations of philosophical readings
- Learn to close-read and evaluate a philosophical text
- Learn to write a philosophical argument and essay

Assessment tasks

- Essay 1
- Essay 2
- Tutorial participation
- Quizzes

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

- Learn basic theories and approaches in metaphysics
- Learn to verbally express your opinion and interpretations of philosophical readings
- Learn to close-read and evaluate a philosophical text
- Learn to write a philosophical argument and essay

Assessment tasks

- Essay 1
- Essay 2
- Tutorial participation
- Quizzes

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

- Learn basic theories and approaches in metaphysics

- Learn to verbally express your opinion and interpretations of philosophical readings
- Learn to close-read and evaluate a philosophical text
- Learn to write a philosophical argument and essay

Assessment tasks

- Essay 1
- Essay 2
- Tutorial participation
- Quizzes

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

- Learn to verbally express your opinion and interpretations of philosophical readings
- Learn to write a philosophical argument and essay

Assessment tasks

- Essay 1
- Essay 2
- Tutorial participation

Engaged and Ethical Local and Global citizens

As local citizens our graduates will be aware of indigenous perspectives and of the nation's historical context. They will be engaged with the challenges of contemporary society and with knowledge and ideas. We want our graduates to have respect for diversity, to be open-minded, sensitive to others and inclusive, and to be open to other cultures and perspectives: they should have a level of cultural literacy. Our graduates should be aware of disadvantage and social justice, and be willing to participate to help create a wiser and better society.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Assessment task

- Tutorial participation

Socially and Environmentally Active and Responsible

We want our graduates to be aware of and have respect for self and others; to be able to work with others as a leader and a team player; to have a sense of connectedness with others and country; and to have a sense of mutual obligation. Our graduates should be informed and active participants in moving society towards sustainability.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Assessment task

- Tutorial participation