



Metaphysics

Philosophy 352
California State University, Northridge
Spring 2016

Instructor: Tim Black

Class meets: Tuesdays & Thursdays; 3:30 – 5:10 p.m. in SH 276

Office hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 2:00 – 3:30 p.m.

Office: ST 516

Office phone: 818.677.7205

Instructor's email: tim.black@csun.edu

I invite you to visit me during my office hours and to talk with me via telephone and e-mail. I always welcome your comments and questions, and I am happy to talk with you about the course material or other philosophical or administrative matters.

Department office: ST 522

Department phone: 818.677.2757

AIMS OF THE COURSE: This course features an examination of some leading contemporary views in metaphysics. Metaphysics seeks answers to questions about fundamental relationships such as identity and causation. We will, for example, consider questions like the following: In virtue of what is some past or future creature *you*? What does it mean for one event to be the *cause* of another?

REQUIRED TEXT: Lowe, E. J. *A Survey of Metaphysics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002)

COURSE OBJECTIVES: Students who complete PHIL 352 will be able to

1. Describe the main claims and explain the arguments presented for those claims in philosophical works.
2. Articulate various positions on significant issues in metaphysics, articulate differences between those positions, and evaluate those positions.
3. State and defend philosophical positions in writing.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES: The Department of Philosophy has adopted the following program goals for the Philosophy Major:

1. Students will develop a critical understanding of the work of central thinkers in the Western philosophical tradition.
2. Students will read and comprehend philosophical texts.
3. Students will respond critically and analytically to philosophical positions, arguments, and methodologies, including positions, arguments, and methodologies involved in the investigation of significant issues in epistemology, metaphysics and value theory.
4. Students will defend their own philosophical positions and arguments.
5. Students will write well-organized philosophical essays in which they clearly articulate philosophical positions and arguments.
6. Students will write well-organized philosophical essays in which they clearly and effectively present and defend their own philosophical positions and arguments.

7. Students will apply the basic concepts essential to a critical examination and evaluation of argumentative discourse, where this includes learning how to determine whether an argument is valid and whether it is sound.

ATTENDANCE: Since you are responsible for any and all material presented in class, and since each class represents an important opportunity to discuss the material, regular attendance is essential to doing well in the course.

For Spring 2016, the last day to change your academic program without a formal request is Friday, February 21, 2016.

POLICY REGARDING THE USE OF COMPUTERS, TABLETS, AND PHONES DURING CLASS: You may not use a computer or tablet of any sort during class. This means that, during class, you may not use your own laptop computer, you may not use someone else's laptop computer, you may not use an iPad,.... Also, please do not use a phone during class.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: If you have a disability, please identify yourself to me and to the university so that we can reasonably accommodate your learning and the preparation and evaluation of the work that you must do for this course. Please contact Disability Resources and Educational Services, Bayramian Hall 110, 818.677.2684 (fax: 818.677.4932; email: dres@csun.edu). For more information, visit DRES's website at the following address: <http://www.csun.edu/dres/index.php>.

EVALUATION: Your final grade in the course will be based on the following:

- First paper 25%
- Second paper 25%
- Participation 50%

GRADES: I will use the plus/minus grading system. Letter grades are assigned according to the following system:

- 100-92% = A 86-83% = B 76-73% = C 66-63% = D
- 91-90% = A- 82-80% = B- 72-70% = C- 62-60% = D-
- 89-87% = B+ 79-77% = C+ 69-67% = D+ 59-0% = F

CHEATING AND PLAGIARISM: I consider academic dishonesty a very serious issue. If you are unclear about what constitutes academic dishonesty or about the possible repercussions of and penalties for acts of academic dishonesty, please consult the California State University, Northridge [Student Conduct Code](#). Moreover, I subscribe to and will enforce CSUN's [Nondiscrimination Policies](#) and its Student Conduct Code as they are stated in the [Policies and Procedures](#) section of the California State University, Northridge University [Catalog](#).

ASSIGNMENTS

PAPERS: You are required to write two papers for this class. Each of the two paper assignments requires you to write an essay of *no more than 1500 words*. The two papers are due as indicated on the Schedule. I will distribute each topic, as well as details about each assignment, well before its due date. *I will accept no*

paper submitted after its due date; a paper submitted after its due date will earn none—that is, 0%—of the points available for that assignment. A paper that has been plagiarized **to any extent** will earn none—that is, 0%—of the points available for that assignment.

I will evaluate your paper on the basis of the quality of the arguments you provide in favor of your position. More specifically, your paper (a) must be well organized and readable, (b) must demonstrate your ability to provide charitable and reasonable interpretations of the philosophical arguments we encounter, (c) must demonstrate your ability to provide reasonable critical evaluations of those arguments, and (d) must demonstrate your ability to present and defend your own reasonable and persuasive philosophical argument.

PARTICIPATION: Your participation grade will be based on the following: your participation in class discussions and in some cases the quality of your participation in class discussions; your completion—and, again, in some cases, your successful completion—of in-class projects, writing workshops, activities, and assignments. Should you miss, due to absence etc., an in-class project, writing workshop, activity, or assignment, **you may not make it up**. You may submit an in-class project, activity, or assignment **only** during the class meeting when it was assigned. I plan to drop the five lowest participation scores you earn (although I hasten to add that *this is subject to change*).

EXTRA CREDIT: I will assign **no** extra-credit work. There is nothing that you, individually or collectively, can do for extra credit. This means that you should concentrate on the credit assignments; you should make every effort to do as well as you can on the papers and in terms of your participation. I will ignore requests that I receive via e-mail for extra-credit work.

SCHEDULE		
January 26	Course introduction What is metaphysics?	Lowe, Chapter 1, pages 1-4
January 28	Identity over time and change of composition	Lowe, Chapter 2
February 2	Identity over time and change of composition	Lowe, Chapter 2
February 4	Qualitative change and the doctrine of temporal parts	Lowe, Chapter 3
February 9	Qualitative change and the doctrine of temporal parts	Lowe, Chapter 3
February 11	Substantial change and spatiotemporal coincidence	Lowe, Chapter 4
February 16	Substantial change and spatiotemporal coincidence	Lowe, Chapter 4
February 18	Personal Identity	Link to reading on Moodle
February 23	Personal Identity	Link to reading on Moodle
February 25	Necessity and identity	Lowe, Chapter 5
March 1	Necessity and identity	Lowe, Chapter 5
March 3	Essentialism	Lowe, Chapter 6
March 8	Essentialism	Lowe, Chapter 6
March 10	The Metaphysics of Race	Reading posted on Moodle
March 15	The Metaphysics of Race	Reading posted on Moodle
March 17	Causes and Conditions	Lowe, Chapter 9 (and maybe (parts of) Chapter 10)
March 22	SPRING RECESS	
March 24	SPRING RECESS	
March 29	Causes and Conditions	Lowe, Chapter 9

		(and maybe (parts of) Chapter 10)
March 31	CESAR CHAVEZ HOLIDAY	
April 5	Event Causation and Agent Causation PAPER #1 DUE	Lowe, Chapter 11
April 7	Event Causation and Agent Causation	Lowe, Chapter 11
April 12	Absolutism versus Relationalism	Lowe, Chapter 14
April 14	Absolutism versus Relationalism	Lowe, Chapter 14
April 19	The Paradoxes of Motion and the Possibility of Change	Lowe, Chapter 16
April 21	The Paradoxes of Motion and the Possibility of Change	Lowe, Chapter 16
April 26	Tense and the Reality of Time	Lowe, Chapter 17
April 28	Tense and the Reality of Time	Lowe, Chapter 17
May 3	Realism versus Nominalism	Lowe, Chapter 19
May 5	Realism versus Nominalism	Lowe, Chapter 19
May 10	The Abstract and the Concrete	Lowe, Chapter 20
May 12	The Abstract and the Concrete PAPER #2 DUE	Lowe, Chapter 20

NOTE: Everything in this syllabus, *including the reading assignments and the paper assignments and due dates*, is subject to revision. I will announce any and all revisions in class and, in general, do my best to make sure that everyone knows about revisions. If you miss class, you must nevertheless submit assignments according to any revisions that I make to the Schedule. You should either make sure that you don't miss class or find a sure way of becoming aware of any revisions that I make to the Schedule or to the syllabus.