

PHIL358 Metaphysics



PHIL358 Metaphysics

SEMESTER 2
2008

MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY
DIVISION OF SOCIETY, CULTURE, MEDIA AND PHILOSOPHY
UNIT OUTLINE
PHIL358: Metaphysics

Semester Two, 2008

Unit Convenor: Dr Elizabeth Schier

Students in this unit should read this unit outline carefully at the start of semester. It contains important information about the unit. If anything in it is unclear, please consult one of the teaching staff in the unit.

ABOUT THIS UNIT

This unit looks at four phenomena that puzzle metaphysicians: time, colours, free will and the mind. The first part of the course will examine the nature of time and whether time travel is possible. The second part of the course will examine the metaphysics of colours: what are colours; are colours in the head or in the world? The third part of the course will look at free will: is freedom compatible with a deterministic materialistic world; what light can the psychology of action control shed on this issue? The final part of the course will focus on the metaphysics of the mind: is it possible to fit a mind that is somehow more than the brain in a physical world?

Unit rationale: Metaphysicians are concerned with understanding how the world really is. This unit is designed to introduce students to the sorts of problems that puzzle metaphysicians and demonstrate how a naturalistic approach to these problems can enable significant progress. The solution to these puzzles can inform research in many areas of philosophy including moral philosophy, philosophy of mind and philosophy of science.

TEACHING STAFF

Convenor: Dr Elizabeth Schier. W6A 740 Phone 9850 8858. Email: elizabeth.schier@scmp.mq.edu.au Consultation by appointment

Elizabeth will be away in the second week at a conference (on the metaphysics of mind) and the lectures and tutorials will be given by Professor Peter Menzies.

CLASSES

Lectures	Monday 2pm Thursday 12pm		X5B 143 E6A 108
Tutorials	Monday 3pm Thursday 2pm	Or	C3A 302 C3B 306

The timetable for classes can be found on the University web site at:

<http://www.timetables.mq.edu.au/>

N.B. Tutorial attendance is compulsory. Tutorials commence in the second week of semester.

This unit is worth 4 credit points. It is assumed that one credit point equals three hours work per week on average, across the whole semester (including non-teaching weeks). For this unit you are therefore expected to put in on average *12 hours work per week* across the whole semester (including the 3 hours of classes each week).

i-lecture The lectures will be recorded with i-lecture, but the recordings will only be released for revision purposes before the essays. The recordings are not a substitute for lecture attendance.

REQUIRED AND RECOMMENDED TEXTS

The required reading for this unit is contained in the course reader: *PHIL358 Metaphysics*, available at the Co-op Bookstore on campus.

The readings contained in the Reader are **compulsory** reading for this unit. You will be expected to keep up with the readings throughout semester, and tutorial discussion will presume prior familiarity with the relevant readings.

An additional list of Supplementary Readings will be provided with the relevant essay questions.

UNIT WEB PAGE

The web page for this unit will be on Online Learning @ MQ, which is accessible at:

<https://learn.mq.edu.au/webct/>

LEARNING OUTCOMES

The learning outcomes of this unit are:

- A good general knowledge of the major issues of the metaphysical problems examined.
- An ability to understand and analyse theories and arguments in the relevant literatures
- An ability to critically evaluate these theories and arguments.
- The ability to develop one's own view or perspective, through consideration and analysis of the views and arguments presented in the unit, and the ability to present one's views with clarity and rigour.
- Clarity of thought; clarity of verbal expression; clarity of written expression and exposition.

In addition to the unit-specific learning objectives, academic programs at Macquarie seek to develop students' generic skills in a range of areas. An aim of this unit is for students to develop their skills in the following:

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1. *Comprehension skills*: skills involved in *understanding* complex ideas and arguments and reading, *understanding*, and *analysing* complex texts.
2. *Critical thinking skills*: skills involved in *analysing*, *evaluating*, and *criticising* views and arguments.
3. *Problem-solving skills*: skills that enable us to solve *practical* and *theoretical* problems through the application of theories and knowledge.
4. *Communication skills*: skills involved in *expressing* and *presenting* ideas clearly and logically, both orally (in tutorial discussions and presentations) and in writing (in essays).
5. *Creative-thinking skills*: skills involved in developing new ideas or perspectives and constructing arguments.
6. *Research skills*: skills that enable us to find out about and understand a new field of knowledge.

TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGY

PHIL358 is taught through lectures and tutorials. Opportunities will be provided throughout the unit for interactive discussion, in both lectures and tutorials.

There are weekly reading requirements that must be completed prior to lectures and tutorials. Students are expected to attend tutorials prepared to discuss the topics covered in the lectures and readings. Students are also expected to participate actively in lectures.

UNIT SCHEDULE

Note that the recommended readings for the lectures in each week will as a general rule form the basis for the tutorial on that material in the following week. For more precise details see tutorial questions on course website.

Week One The nature of Time

Heinlein, R. (1959) 'By His Bootstraps' *Menace Earth*

Lewis, D. (1976) 'The Paradoxes of Time Travel'

Week Two Time Travel

McTaggart, J.M.E. (1927) 'The Unreality of Time' *The Nature of Existence* Volume II

Smart, J.C.C. (1963) 'The Space-Time World' *Philosophy and Scientific Realism*

Week Three The Science of Colours part 1

Note there will be no lecture on Monday, but the tutorial will run

Palmer, S. E. (1999). *Vision Science: Photons to phenomenology*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. Chapter 3

Week Four Science of Colours part 2 and Subjectivism part 1

Hardin, C. L. (1988). *Color for Philosophers*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing. Chapter 2

Week Five Metaphysics of Colours Subjectivism part 2 and Objectivism

Akins, K. and M. Hahn (2000). The Peculiarity of Color. *Color Perception: Philosophical, Psychological, artistic, and Computational Perspectives*. S. Davis. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Byrne, A. and D. R. Hilbert (2003). "Color Realism and Color Science." *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 26(1): 3-64.

Week Six Metaphysics of Colours Objectivism and Representation

Churchland, P. M. (2007). "On the Reality (and Diversity) of Objective Colors: How Color-Qualia Space Is a Map of Reflectance-Profile Space." *Philosophy of Science* 74(2): 119-149.

Week Seven Free Will: Introduction

Nagel, T. (1987) 'Free Will' *What Does it all Mean?* Oxford, Oxford University Press

Hume, D. Selection from *Treatise on Human Nature*

Churchland, P. S. (2002). *Brain-wise: studies in neurophilosophy*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Week Eight Free Will: the data part 1

Note there will be no lecture on Monday due to the public holiday

Libet, B., C. A. Gleason, E. W. Wright and D. K. Pearl (1983). "Time of Conscious Intention to act in Relation to Onset of Cerebral Activity (Readiness-Potential)." *Brain* 106: 623-42.

Week Nine Free Will: the data part 2

Wegner, D. M. (2003). "The Mind's Best Trick: How we experience conscious will." *Trends in Cognitive Science* 7(2): 65-9.

Dennett, D. C. (2003). "The Self as a Responding - and Responsible - Artefact." *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 1001: 39-50.

Week Ten Free Will: case studies

Schizophrenia: Spence, S. A. and C. Parry (2006). Schizophrenic Avolition: Implications from functional and structural neuroimaging. *Disorders of Volition*. N. Sebanz and W. Prinz. MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.

The prefrontal cortex: Grafman, J. and F. Krueger (2006). Volition and the Human Prefrontal Cortex. *Disorders of Volition*. N. Sebanz and W. Prinz. Cambridge MA, MIT Press.

Week Eleven The Irreducibility of the mind

Fodor, J. (1974). "Special sciences, or the Disunity of Science as a Working Hypothesis." *Synthese* 28: 97-115.

Putnam, H. (1973). "Reductionism and the Nature of Psychology." *Cognition* 2(1): 131-46.

Week Twelve The problem of Mental Causation

Kim, J. (1993a). The Myth of Non-Reductive Materialism. *Supervenience and Mind*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Kim, J. (1993b). Postscript on Mental Causation. *Supervenience and Mind*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Kim, J. (1998). *Mind in a Physical World: An essay on the mind-body problem and mental causation*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Week Thirteen Responses to the problem

Jackson, F. and P. Pettit (1990). "Program Explanation: A general perspective."
Analysis 50(2): 107-17.

Fodor, J. (1997). "Special Sciences: Still Autonomous After all These Years."
Philosophical Perspectives 11: 149-63.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ASSESSMENT AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

Important Note: All assessment components in this unit are compulsory. Students who have not completed all of the assessments will not be eligible to pass the unit.

Assessment for the unit is made up of five components: 2 essays, an essay plan, a report on how essay criticisms were addressed and tutorial work.

(i) Two Essays	3000 words each	25%
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The essays are designed to develop your ability to engage with the philosophical issues and questions in detail. Essay writing develops and tests your ability to express, analyse and organise key ideas clearly and systematically, and to develop an argument in a sustained way. Essay topics will be distributed at least 3 weeks prior to each due date. The first essay will be marked two weeks after the due date and will be returned in tutorials. The second essay will be available for collection by the 28th November.

Essay Due Dates:

First Essay Due:	Thursday October 9, 4pm
Second Essay Due:	Thursday November 13, 4pm

(ii) Essay Plan	20%
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The essay plan is designed to assist you in writing essays, in particular to lay out your ideas in a logical way and to ensure that you have a complete and good argument. It is a plan for the first essay and is due three weeks before the first essay. If you hand up your plan electronically and on time you will have it back within ten days.

Due Date	Thursday 18 th September
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(iii) Essay Response	10%
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The essay response is also designed to help you become a reflective and therefore better essay writer. It will be due at the same time as the second essay and the task is to reflect on the critical comments given on your first essay and to demonstrate how you have improved on these problems in your second essay.

Due Date	Thursday November 13, 4pm
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The tutorial work is designed to assist you in reading and understanding philosophical research. Tutorial attendance and preparation is compulsory. Each week you will need to hand up a one page summary of the argument of at least one of the set readings. This is due at the time of your tutorial and if you do not attend the tutorial the written work for that week will not be counted. You need to attend and hand up the work for at least 75% of the tutorials. Unless supported by medical documentation or the equivalent, students who fail to attend at least 75% of tutorials and lectures will not be eligible to pass the unit. If you do more than 75% of the tutorials the marks from your best 75% will count to your final grade.

Submission of Work:

Please submit your essays and plans and response through the **SCMP office** on Level 1, Building W6A. All essays must be attached to a signed Philosophy Cover Sheet. No essays will be accepted via email.

You will also need to submit both essays to turnitin. Your marks will not be finalised until your essays have been screened

Tutorial work is to be handed up at the end of the tutorial.

Extensions must be requested **before** the due date. Essays submitted after the due date, or after the extension date, will lose 1 mark for each day late. Please note that deadlines in other subjects, and workload pressures, will not be regarded as grounds for the granting of extensions.

PLAGIARISM

The University defines plagiarism in its rules: "Plagiarism involves using the work of another person and presenting it as one's own." Plagiarism is a serious breach of the University's rules and carries significant penalties. You must read the University's practices and procedures on plagiarism. These can be found in the *Handbook of Undergraduate Studies* or on the web at:

<http://www.student.mq.edu.au/plagiarism/>

The policies and procedures explain what plagiarism is, how to avoid it, the procedures that will be taken in cases of suspected plagiarism, and the penalties if you are found guilty. Penalties may include a deduction of marks, failure in the unit, and/or referral to the University Discipline Committee.

TURNITIN

This unit uses the anti-plagiarism system Turnitin. *Both* essays are to be processed through Turnitin

Login to Turnitin: http://www.scmp.mq.edu.au/ug_turnitin.html

Your login name is your official Macquarie email address; your password will be sent to this address prior to the first assignment to be processed by Turnitin.

Further information on Turnitin can be found at:

http://www.scmp.mq.edu.au/ug_turnitin_instructions.html

UNIVERSITY POLICY ON GRADING

Academic Senate has a set of guidelines on the distribution of grades across the range from fail to high distinction. Your final result will include one of these grades plus a standardised numerical grade (SNG).

On occasion your raw mark for a unit (i.e., the total of your marks for each assessment item) may not be the same as the SNG which you receive. Under the Senate guidelines, results may be scaled to ensure that there is a degree of comparability across the university, so that units with the same past performances of their students should achieve similar results.

It is important that you realise that the policy does not require that a minimum number of students are to be failed in any unit. In fact it does something like the opposite, in requiring examiners to explain their actions if more than 20% of students fail in a unit.

The process of scaling does not change the order of marks among students. A student who receives a higher raw mark than another will also receive a higher final scaled mark.

For an explanation of the policy see

<http://www.mq.edu.au/senate/MQUonly/Issues/Guidelines2003.doc> or

<http://www.mq.edu.au/senate/MQUonly/Issues/detailedguidelines.doc>

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Macquarie University provides a range of Academic Student Support Services.

Details of these services can accessed at <http://www.student.mq.edu.au>

I hope you enjoy this unit
Elizabeth Schier