

**Phil Met, Fall 2015, Somewhere.**

# **Metaphysics**

**Dr. Scott O'Connor**

soconnor@njcu.edu

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## **Course Description and Objectives**

Most of us believe that change exists; that babies are born, that trees grow, and that planes fly in the sky. However, the existence of change has long been doubted by certain metaphysicians. Some deny that any kind of change exists. Other deny that certain kinds of change like motion exist. These denials seem radical; surely babies are born, trees do grow, and planes really do fly in the sky. Nevertheless, the arguments that change does not exist are powerful. Our goal in this course is to understand and assess these arguments.

## **Learning Objectives**

Upon completing this course, students will be able to (i) read philosophical texts, (ii) clearly and charitably explain viewpoints that are not their own, (iii) think critically and philosophically, (iv) write well-structured prose in which they clearly state a thesis and persuasively defend it, (v) demonstrate an understanding of several core metaphysical issues..

## **Reading**

The following are required for this course:

- ‘Metaphysics: The Big Questions’, ed. Van Inwagen, 2nd edition’ (Available from the campus book store and online retailers)

## Requirements

- *Workload:* Successfully completing this course requires a minimum commitment of 6 hours per week.
- *Reading Quizzes:* 6 weekly reading quizzes administered through Blackboard. Once you open a quiz, you will have 1 hour to complete it. This is an automatic function performed by Blackboard.
- *Discussion Questions:* 3 discussion questions submitted through Blackboard. Answers will be made public to the entire class after the due date.
- *Essays:* Two essays submitted through Blackboard. Essays are graded according to a rubric that can be found at the end of this syllabus.
- *Grade Distribution:* 6 Quizzes—5 points each (30 total); 3 Discussion Questions—10 points each (30 total); Essays—25 points each (50 total).
- *Grade Breakdown:*

96–110	A		77–79	C+
90–95	A-		73–76	C
87–89	B+		70–72	C-
83–86	B		60–69	D
80–82	B -		0–59	F

## Policies

- *Late work & Make-up Policy:*
  - All assignments must be submitted through Blackboard by 1:00 pm on the due date (see assignment schedule below).
  - No make-ups or late work accepted under any circumstances. No exceptions.
  - Blackboard difficulties are rare and automatically reported to instructors. Under no circumstance will a student's report of a Blackboard difficulty be reason for an extension. It is your responsibility to contact blackboard support for help: [dlsupport@njcu.edu](mailto:dlsupport@njcu.edu).
- *Communication:* All communication will be through Blackboard. Messages will be responded to within two days of receiving them.
- *Grading Schedule:* Grades will be available within 1 week of an assignment being submitted.

- *Statement for students with disabilities:* If you are a student with a disability and wish to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, please register with the Office of Specialized Services and Supplemental Instruction (OSS/SI). To begin this process, complete the registration form available on the OSS/SI website at [www.njcu.edu/Specialized\\_Services.aspx](http://www.njcu.edu/Specialized_Services.aspx) (listed under Student Resources-Forms). Contact OSS/SI at 201-200-2091 or visit the office in Karnoutsos Hall, Room 102 for additional information.

## Plagiarism

- You are bound by [NJCU's Academic Integrity Policy](#)
- Penalty for plagiarism:
  - 1st infraction: 0 for the assignment.
  - 2nd infraction: 0 for the entire course & application for permanent record on student's transcript. (Repeated violations can lead to expulsion from NJCU).

## Weekly Course Schedule

Dates refer to the first day of the week:

1. 08/31 INTRODUCTION
2. 09/07 SPACE
3. Flatland
4. Flatland–try get short movie.
5. 09/14 SPACE
  - a) 'The Fourth Dimension: an Excerpt from The Ambidextrous Universe', by Martin Gardner
  - b) 'Incongruent Counterparts and Higher Dimensions', by James Van Cleve
6. 09/21 SPACE: Absolute Motion, relative vs. absolute space
  - a) Online
7. 09/28 ZENO: Racecourse

a) Achilles and the Tortoise: Max Black.

b) Online

8. 10/05 ZENO: Arrow Paradox

a) A Contemporary Look at Zeno's Paradoxes: an Excerpt from Space, Time, and Motion., by Wesley C. Salmon.

b) Online

9. 10/12 TIME: Direction of time (Oct 14th is midterm grades)

a) Online

10. 10/19 TIME: Time without change (Shoemaker)

a) Online

11. 10/26 TIME: The Reality of Time: Passage of time, Williams and McTaggart

a) Time: an Excerpt from The Nature of Existence: J. McT. E. McTaggart.

b) McTaggart's Arguments against the Reality of Time: an Excerpt from Examination of McTaggart's Philosophy. C. D. Broad.

c) The Myth of Passage, by D. C. Williams.

12. 11/02 CHANGE: Puzzle

a) The Paradox of Increase' Eric T. Olson.

b) Online

13. 11/09 CHANGE Continued

a) Identity, Ostension, and Hypostasis: W. V. O. Quine.

b) In Defense of Stages: Postscript B to "Survival and Identity". by David Lewis.

14. 11/16 TIME TRAVEL

a) 'All You Zombie', Heinlien, online

b) Grandfather Paradox, online

15. 11/23 TIME TRAVEL: Continued.

a) The Paradoxes of Time Travel, by David Lewis.

16. 11/30 PERSONAL IDENTITY: Student Presentations
17. 12/7 PERSONAL IDENTITY: Student Presentations
18. 12/14 Continued

