

Phil 205 (2993), 3 Credits, Fall 2017, M&W @ 12:45 p.m., K358.

Metaphysics

Dr. Scott O'Connor

<http://scottoconnor.org/metaphysics>

9/05/2017–12/19/2017

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. 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 and our goal will be to understand and assess them.

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.

Readings

All readings will be posted on the course website. You do not need to purchase anything for this course.

Course Website

There is both a Blackboard site and website for this course (link on first page). Clicking the first link on the left panel within the Blackboard site will bring you to the course website. All assignments will be submitted through Blackboard. Readings, notes, etc. will be posted on the course website. Note that 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.

Requirements

- *Workload:* Expect to spend an average of 15 hours per week completing the readings and assignments. NJCU abides by the Federal and State definitions of a credit hour and adopts a policy consistent with the Carnegie Unit. A three-credit class represents 112.5 hours total of work. See [here](#) for more details.
- *Attendance:* Roll call will be taken. 1 point will be awarded per class up to a maximum of 10 points. Points will not be awarded during weeks 1 & 2.
- *5 short essays* submitted through Blackboard. 7 will be assigned—one for each module—and you must complete 5. If you complete more than 5, the lowest grades will be dropped.
- *2 long essays* submitted through Blackboard comprising a re-write and expansion of a short essay.
- *Course evaluations* completed online. 3 points extra credit for successful completion and screenshot of completed page sent through Blackboard.
- *Grade Distribution:* Attendance—0.5 point per class (10 total); 5 short essays—10 points each (50 total); 2 long essays—20 points each (40 points total)
- *Grade Breakdown:*

96–100	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

- **Student Responsibility:** This syllabus outlines the required text, assignments, requirements, and policies for this course. By taking this course, you agree to read this syllabus and be bound by those requirements and policies.
- *Academic Integrity:* All the work you turn in (including papers, drafts, and discussion board posts) must be written by you specifically for this course. It must originate with you in form and content with all contributory sources fully and specifically acknowledged. Being a student at NJCU requires you to follow [NJCU's Academic Integrity Policy](#). Penalties for violations are as follows: 1st infraction will result in a 0 for the assignment. 2nd infraction will result in a 0 for the entire course & application for permanent record on student's transcript. (Repeated violations can lead to expulsion from NJCU).

- *Attendance:* You are considered absent if you are (i) not present during roll call, (ii) leave early, (iii) leave without permission, or (iv) leave for an extended period of time. No excuses. No exceptions.
- *Communication:* To comply with Federal Privacy Laws (FERPA) and NJCU policies, all communication will be through Blackboard and/or official NJCU e-mail. Check Blackboard daily. For further information see <http://scottoconnor.org/contact/>.
- *Conduct:* Distracting and disrespectful behaviors, including but not limited to eating, leaving your seat, talking out of turn, and aggression are prohibited. Penalties include, but are not limited to, a loss of attendance points for the day of violation. Repeat offenders will be reported to the Dean of Students.
- *Electronic devices:* Use of electronic device, including, but not limited, to smartphones, dictaphones, tablets, and laptops, is prohibited. Recording a lecture is in violation of Copyright. Penalties include, but are not limited to, a loss of attendance points for the day of violation. Repeat offenders will be reported to the Dean of Students.
- *Format for Written Work:* Submit work to Blackboard as either a pdf, rtf, or doc file. Blackboard will not allow any other format. All work must be typed and neatly presented.
- *Grading:* Grades will be available within 1–2 weeks of an assignment being submitted. See: <http://scottoconnor.org/resources/grading> for further information.
- *Late work & Make-up Policy:* See the assignment schedule below. No make-ups or late work accepted under any circumstances. No exceptions under any imaginable circumstances.
- *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 <http://www.njcu.edu/oss> (listed under Student Resources-Forms). Contact OSS/SI at 201-200-2091 or visit the office in Karnoutsos Hall, Room 102 for additional information.
- *Turnitin:* Students agree that by taking this course all assignments are subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com. Assignments submitted to Turnitin.com will be included as source documents in Turnitin.com's restricted access database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism in such documents. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site. For further information about Turnitin, please visit: <http://www.turnitin.com>

Weekly Course Schedule

Dates refer to the first day of the week. Complete the readings before the first class of the week. All readings and handouts will be available on the website. Changes to the syllabus will be announced in class and *via* your NJCU email address. All assignments must be submitted through Blackboard by Wednesday, 10:00am. No late work accepted. No exceptions.

Introduction: What is Metaphysics?

9/6/17: Introduction

1. 'What is Metaphysics?', Robin Le Poidevin

Module 1: Appearance and Reality: Parmenides

9/11/17: Parmenides' Challenge

1. *On Nature*
2. 'Presocratic Themes', David Sedley (optional)

9/18/17: Responses

1. *Physics* Bk 1, Aristotle
2. 'The Eleatic Challenge in Aristotle's *Physics* I.8,' Scott O'Connor
3. 'The Subjects of Natural Generations in Aristotle's *Physics* I.7,' Scott O'Connor (optional)

Module 2: Relativism

9/25/17: The Knowledge Argument

1. **Short essay 1 due**
2. *Theaetetus*, Plato

10/2/17: The Essence Argument

1. *Metaphysics* Bk. 4, Aristotle
2. 'Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Aristotle and the Metaphysics', ch.4-6, Vasilis Politis

Module 3: Does motion exist?

10/9/17: Zeno's Paradoxes

1. **Short essay 2 due**
2. *Physics* Bk 6, Aristotle
3. 'A Contemporary Look at Zeno's Paradoxes: an Excerpt from Space, Time, and Motion.', Wesley C. Salmon.
4. 'The Paradoxes of Motion and the Possibility of Change', E.J. Lowe, pp. 288-297

10/16/17: Continued

1. 'The Paradoxes of Motion and the Possibility of Change', E.J. Lowe, pp. 300-306

Module 4: Space

10/23/17: Absolute vs. Relational Theories of Space

1. **Short essay 3 due**
2. 'Space, Absolute and Relational', Tim Maudlin

10/30/17 The Fourth Dimension

1. 'Incongruent Counterparts and Higher Dimensions', James Van Cleave
2. 'Flatland', continued.
3. 'The Fourth Dimension: an Excerpt from The Ambidextrous Universe', Martin Gardner

Module 5: Does Time Exist?

11/6/17: Two Theories

1. **Short essay 4 due**
2. 'SlaughterHouse Five', by Kurt Vonnegut

11/13/17: The Flow of Time

1. 'Time: an Excerpt from The Nature of Existence', J. McT. E. McTaggart.
2. 'McTaggart's Arguments against the Reality of Time: an Excerpt from Examination of McTaggart's Philosophy', C. D. Broad.
3. 'The Myth of Passage', D. C. Williams.

Module 6: Change

11/20/17: Puzzles about persistence

1. **Short essay 5 due**
2. **Research paper 1 due**
3. 'Of Confused Subjects Which Are Equivalent to Two Subjects: An Excerpt from The Port-Royal Logic', Antoine Arnauld and Pierre Nicole.
4. 'Change and Identity', Michael Rea, pp.102–111
5. 'The Paradox of Increase', Eric T. Olson (optional)

11/27/17: Solutions

1. 'Identity, Ostension, and Hypostasis', W. V. O. Quine.
2. 'In Defense of Stages: Postscript B to "Survival and Identity"', David Lewis.

Module 7: Time Travel

12/4/17: Is Time Travel Possible?

1. **Short essay 6 due**

2. 'All You Zombies', Robert Heinlein
3. 'Interfering with History', Robin Le Poidevin

12/11/17: Time Travel: Continued.

1. No class on Monday
2. 'The Paradoxes of Time Travel', David Lewis.

12/18/17: Finals

1. No exam
2. **Short essay 7 due**
3. **Research paper 2 due**