

# 130 Metaphysics

Christian Wüthrich

Fall 2012

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Class schedule: TuTh 9:30-10:50pm, CSB 005  
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Metaphysics, it has been claimed, is the study of the most fundamental aspects of the structure of reality, and in this sense precedes empirical science. So what is metaphysics, and how does it relate to science? Before we conclude the course by considering its relation to science, we will discuss many questions that can be thought to delineate metaphysics. Among them are the following:

How can a thing change over time and yet remain that thing? Is it possible that we could have found ourselves in a world where entirely different laws of nature hold? What does it mean to say that an event caused another, and is it possible that we change the past? Do we live in space and time, and if so, what is the nature of space and time? By virtue of what is a left hand different from a right hand? Is time travel possible? And finally, do humans have free will?

This class will engage these questions with an emphasis on contemporary views and debates. Accordingly, our approach will be topic-oriented, rather than historical.

*Prerequisites:* Upper-division standing or permission of instructor.

## Required texts

- E J Lowe, *A Survey of Metaphysics*, Oxford UP, 2002.
- There are two additional sources for readings in this class: the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (SEP) and e-reserves. Links to both are available on the course web page.

## Course requirements and evaluation

The grade for this course will be determined by the total points a student earns from the three types of evaluation indicated below. I grade to the curve, i.e., the top 25-30% of the students in this class (including all who take it for a letter grade or a P/NP, but not including the withdrawals W) will get a grade in the A range (A+, A, A-), the next 25-35% a grade in the B range (B+, B, B-), the next 25-30% a grade in the C range (C+, C, C-), and the remaining 5-25% a D or an F. This is the minimum I guarantee; if the class has worked very well and no one deserves a D or an F, I will adjust the curve upwards, accordingly.

1. *Quizzes* (30 points): There will be **five short quizzes** during the quarter, each worth 6 points. They will be announced in class one meeting before they will be held. No make-up quizzes will be given.
2. *Midterm paper* (30 points) [<http://www.turnitin.com>]: There will be a **take-home midterm paper** due on 1 November 2012. I shall hand out a list of paper topics fairly early in the course. For each day your paper is late, five points will be deducted from your point total, although no negative point totals will be given.
3. *Final exam* (40 points): There will be a **final exam** on 13 December 2012, 8:00 to 10:59am, in a location to be announced. The format of the exam will be announced in class. You are not allowed to use any books or notes or the like, i.e. the exam is ‘closed-books’. The final exam is cumulative, i.e. it covers all the material of the entire course.

The midterm paper must be submitted through <http://www.turnitin.com> by the due date in order to earn credit. You must enroll at <http://www.turnitin.com> by creating a new profile. You will need the following course information:

Class ID: 5602116  
Enrollment Password: phil130fa12

Note the difference between lower case ‘l’ and the number ‘1’. If you have any problems with using <http://www.turnitin.com>, you can contact the Instructional Web Development Center of Academic Computing Services at 858-822-3315 or [iwdc@ucsd.edu](mailto:iwdc@ucsd.edu).

## The fine print

Students agree that by taking this course all required papers will be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to the terms of use agreement posted on the Turnitin.com site.

You must observe the University’s Policy on Integrity of Scholarship, which can be found at <http://students.ucsd.edu/academics/academic-integrity/policy.html>.

Make-up exams (for both midterm and final) will only be given under the most severe circumstances. The student who wishes to write a make-up exam must inform me (by phone or email) ahead of the time of when the exam is due (midterm) or takes place (final). In order to qualify for a make-up exam, appropriate evidence of the most severe circumstances must be produced by the student. I will determine, in consultation with the student, what qualifies as appropriate evidence.

## Tentative schedule

<b>Final Exam:</b> Thursday, 13 December 2012, 8:00 to 10:59am
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Texts marked with an asterisk ‘\*’ serve as background reading and are not mandatory.

**Date Topic and reading assignments**

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- 27 Sep Introduction: the nature of metaphysics
- 2 Oct Introduction continued: being and modes of being  
*Lowe, Ch 1*
- 4 Oct Identity and Change 1: Identity over time and change of composition  
*Lowe, Ch 2*  
\* *André Gallois, 'Identity over time', SEP*
- 9 Oct Identity and Change 2: Qualitative change and the doctrine of temporal parts  
*Lowe, Ch 3*  
\* *Katherine Hawley, 'Temporal parts', SEP*
- 11 Oct Modality 1: Necessity and identity  
*Lowe, Ch 5*  
\* *Takashi Yagisawa, 'Possible objects', SEP*
- 16 Oct Special assignment session
- 18 Oct Modality 2: Possible worlds  
*Lowe, Ch 7*
- 23 Oct Modality 3: Possible worlds again  
*David Lewis, 'Counterparts or double lives', e-reserves*  
*David Armstrong, 'The nature of possibility', e-reserves*
- 25 Oct Causation and Conditionals 1: Counterfactual conditionals  
*Lowe, Ch 8*
- 30 Oct Causation and Conditionals 2: Causes and conditions  
*Lowe, Ch 9*
- 1 Nov Causation and Conditionals 3: Counterfactuals and event causation (**Paper due**)  
*Lowe, Ch 10*  
\* *Lewis, 'Causation', e-reserves*
- 6 Nov Spacetime 1: Absolutism vs. relationalism  
*Lowe, Ch 14*  
\* *Nick Huggett and Carl Hoefer, 'Absolute and relational theories of space and motion', SEP*
- 8 Nov Spacetime 2: Incongruent counterparts and the nature of space  
*Lowe, Ch 15*
- 13 Nov Spacetime 3: The paradoxes of motion and the possibility of change  
*Lowe, Ch 16*
- 15 Nov Guest lecture: Professor Jonathan Cohen
- 20 Nov Spacetime 4: Tense and the reality of time  
*Lowe, Ch 17*  
\* *Christian Wüthrich, 'The fate of presentism in modern physics' (selections), e-reserves*
- 27 Nov Spacetime 5: Causation and the direction of time  
*Lowe, Ch 18*  
*Christopher Smeenk and Wüthrich, 'Time travel and time machines' (Secs 1 and 2), e-reserves*
- 29 Nov Free Will  
*Peter van Inwagen, 'The incompatibility of free will and determinism', e-reserves*  
*Lewis, 'Are we free to break the laws?', e-reserves*
- 4 Dec Metaphysics and Science 1  
*Laurie Paul, 'Metaphysics as modeling: the handmaiden's tale', e-reserves*  
*James Ladyman, 'Science, metaphysics and methods', e-reserves*
- 6 Dec Metaphysics and Science 2 and Conclusion  
*Craig Callender, 'Philosophy of science and metaphysics', e-reserves*