



## PHIL 2010: Issues in Theoretical Philosophy

0.5 credit. Issues drawn from epistemology, metaphysics, philosophy of mind, philosophy of language, and related fields will be examined through careful study of significant philosophical texts after 1900, along with some ensuing debates. Prerequisite(s): enrolment in Honours or Combined Honours Philosophy programs, or in philosophy, Ethics, and Public Affairs, or permission of the Department.

Winter Term 2024  
Mondays & Wednesdays  
4:05–5:25 p.m.

Dr. David Matheson  
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Office hours:  
Wednesdays, 10:05 a.m.–12:05 p.m.

### Overview & objectives

In this course we will explore some of the most important theoretical problems in philosophy. Because it so aptly and succinctly characterizes the problems we will consider, we will use an introductory textbook from Thomas Nagel to help structure our explorations. Corresponding to the brief chapters of this text will be more advanced readings that will be the focus of our weekly discussions.

There are two main objectives in this course. The first is to give you a very good foundational understanding of the theoretical problems we will explore. The second is to give you the opportunity to develop your own line of thought about some aspect of one of these problems.

### Text & readings

I have ordered copies of the Nagel text for purchase at the bookstore, though you are free to find your own copy elsewhere. Here is the information about the text:

Nagel, T. (1987). *What does it all mean? A very short introduction to philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

The more advanced readings that we will consider in conjunction with this text are either accessible to you via our library's digital holdings, or will be made available to you on Brightspace. They are as follows:

- Anscombe, G.E.M. (1958). Modern moral philosophy. *Philosophy*, 33, 1-19.
- Frankfurt, H. (1969). Alternate possibilities and moral responsibility. *Journal of Philosophy*, 66, 829-39.
- Frege, G. ([1892] 1948). Sense and reference, trans. by M. Black, *The Philosophical Review*, 57, 209-30.
- Kim, J. (2001). Lonely souls: Causality and substance dualism. In K. Corcoran (ed.), *Soul, body, and survival* (pp. 30-43). Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Levy, N. (2003). Analytic and Continental philosophy: Explaining the differences. *Metaphilosophy*, 34, 284-304.
- Nagel, T. (1970). Death. *Noûs*, 4, 73-80.
- Pargetter, R. (1984). The scientific inference to other minds, *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 62, 158-63.
- Rawls, J. (1958). Justice as fairness. *The Philosophical Review*, 67, 164-94.
- Stroud, B. (1984). The problem of the external world. In Stroud, *The significance of philosophical scepticism* (pp. 1-38). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wolf, S. (2010). A conception of meaningfulness in life [and] the fitting fulfillment view defended. In Wolf, *Meaning in life and why it matters* (pp. 7-13 & 25-33). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

## Evaluation

Wednesday presentations: 20%+30%=50%  
 Term paper proposal: 10%  
 Term paper: 30%  
 Attendance: 10%

For most weeks, I will lead the Monday class discussion by talking about the advanced reading we are considering that week and encouraging everyone to comment on or ask questions about what I have said. The Wednesday class will then typically be devoted to student presentations, in which students will briefly follow up on something they found particularly interesting in the Monday class discussion.

Every student will be expected to give **two Wednesday presentations** like this during the term. Each presentation must be accompanied by a presentation paper of approximately 600 words (two double-spaced typed pages), which you will give me on the day of the presentation. The first of these presentations is worth 20% of your overall grade, the second 30%.

In the last two and a half weeks of class, every student will also be expected briefly to outline for the rest of the class a **term paper proposal**. The proposal should be accompanied by a written

outline of your proposal, which can be in point-form format and needn't be more than a half a page or so. You will give this written outline to me on the day you give your paper proposal. Because the point of this proposal is to ensure that you are thinking in advance about your term paper for the course, you will normally get the full 10% that this proposal is worth just for outlining it.

You will also be expected to write a **term paper** in the course, approximately 1,500 words (five pages) long. The paper will be developed out of your proposal, and ideally (though not necessarily) based on one of your two presentations. The paper will be worth 30% of your overall grade, and will be due by 11:59 p.m. on the final day of the term's examination period, April 25. I will say more about the evaluation criteria for your term paper as we near the end of classes. But note for now that it will be important when writing the paper to avoid plagiarism, as defined in the university's Academic Integrity Policy, which can be found at:

<https://carleton.ca/secretariat/wp-content/uploads/Academic-Integrity-Policy-2021.pdf> .

The remaining 10% of your overall grade come from **attendance**. Because this is a seminar-style class designed for philosophy majors, you are expected to attend all or most of the classes and be part of the seminar discussions each week. One or two unexplained absences from the class is consistent with this expectation and will still get you the 10%. More unexplained absences than that will mean that you none of this percentage.

## Schedule

The left column of the following table lists the weekly class dates. The centre column indicates the main problems we will be discussing during those dates. In the right column are the corresponding readings.

Jan 8 & 10	Approaches to philosophy	Nagel, Chapter 1 Levy (2003)
Jan 15 & 17	The external world	Nagel, Chapter 2 Stroud (1984)
Jan 22 & 24	Other minds	Nagel, Chapter 3 Pargetter (1984)
Jan 29 & 31	The mind-body problem	Nagel, Chapter 4 Kim (2001)

Feb 5 & 7	The meanings of words	Nagel, Chapter 5 Frege, G. ([1892] 1948)
Feb 12 & 14	Free will	Nagel, Chapter 6 Frankfurt (1969)
Feb 19 & 23	Winter break	
Feb 26 & 28	Right and wrong	Nagel, Chapter 7 Anscombe (1958)
Mar 4 & 6	Justice	Nagel, Chapter 8 Rawls (1958)
Mar 11 & 13	Death	Nagel, Chapter 9 Nagel (1970)
Mar 18 & 20	The meaning of life	Nagel, Chapter 10 Wolf (2010)
Mar 25 & 27	Final essay proposals	
Apr 1 - 8	Final essay proposals	
Apr 25	<b>Term paper due</b>	

## Department of Philosophy and Carleton University Policies (Fall/Winter 2023-24)

### Assignments:

Please follow your professor's instructions on how assignments will be handled electronically. There will be NO hard copies placed in the essay box this coming year.

### Evaluation:

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

### Deferrals for Term Work:

If students are unable to complete term work because of illness or other circumstances beyond their control, they should contact their course instructor no later than *three working days* of the due date. Normally, any deferred term work will be completed by the last day of the term. Term work cannot be deferred by the Registrar.

### Deferrals for Final Exams:

Students are expected to be available for the duration of a course including the examination period. Occasionally, students encounter circumstances beyond their control where they may not be able to write a final examination or submit a take-home examination. Examples of this would be a serious illness or the death of a family member. If you miss a final examination and/or fail to submit a take-home examination by the due date, you may apply for a deferral no later than *three working days* after the original due date (as per the University Regulations in [Section 4.3 of the Undergraduate Calendar](#)). Visit the [Registrar's Office](#) for further information.

### Plagiarism:

It is the responsibility of each student to understand the meaning of 'plagiarism' as defined in the Undergraduate or Graduate Calendars, and to avoid both committing plagiarism and aiding or abetting plagiarism by other students. ([Section 10.1 of the Undergraduate Calendar Academic Regulations](#))

### Academic Accommodation:

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term:

- *Pregnancy or religious obligation:* write to your professor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details visit the [EDC](#) website.
- *Academic accommodations for students with disabilities:* The [Paul Menton Centre](#) for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or [pmc@carleton.ca](mailto:pmc@carleton.ca) for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class test or exam requiring accommodation. After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with your professor to ensure accommodation arrangements are made.
- *Survivors of Sexual Violence:* As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and where survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per [Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy](#).
- *Accommodation for Student Activities:* Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist.

**Important Dates:**

Sept. 6	Classes start.
Sept. 19	Last day for registration and course changes for fall term and fall/winter (two-term) courses.
Sept. 30	Last day for entire fee adjustment when withdrawing from fall term or two-term courses. Withdrawals after this date will result in a permanent notation of WDN on the official transcript.
Oct. 9	Statutory holiday. University closed.
Oct. 23-27	Fall Break – no classes.
Nov. 24	Last day for summative tests or examinations, or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade, before the official examination period.
Dec. 8	Last day of fall term classes. <i>Classes follow a Monday schedule.</i> Last day for academic withdrawal from fall term courses. Last day for handing in term work and the last day that can be specified by a course instructor as a due date for term work for a fall term course.
Dec. 10-22	Final examinations for fall term courses and mid-term examinations in two-term courses. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week.
Dec. 22	All take-home examinations are due.
Jan. 8	Classes begin.
Jan. 19	Last day for registration and course changes in the winter term.
Jan. 31	Last day for a full fee adjustment when withdrawing from winter term courses or from the winter portion of two-term courses. Withdrawals after this date will result in a permanent notation of WDN on the official transcript.
Feb. 19	Statutory holiday. University closed.
Feb. 19-23	Winter Break – no classes.
Mar. 15	Last day for academic withdrawal from fall/winter and winter courses.
Mar. 27	Last day for summative tests or examinations, or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade, in winter term or fall/winter courses before the official examination period.
Mar. 29	Statutory holiday. University closed.
Apr. 10	Last day of two-term and winter term classes. <i>Classes follow a Friday schedule.</i> Last day for handing in term work and the last day that can be specified by a course instructor as a due date for two-term and for winter term courses.
Apr. 11-12	No classes or examinations take place.
Apr. 13-25	Final examinations for winter term and two-term courses. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week.
Apr. 25	All take-home examinations are due.

**Addresses:**

Department of Philosophy:  
[www.carleton.ca/philosophy](http://www.carleton.ca/philosophy)  
 520-2110

Registrar's Office:  
[www.carleton.ca/registrar](http://www.carleton.ca/registrar)  
 520-3500

Academic Advising Centre:  
[www.carleton.ca/academicadvising](http://www.carleton.ca/academicadvising)  
 520-7850

Writing Services:  
<http://www.carleton.ca/csas/writing-services/>  
 520-3822

MacOdrum Library  
<http://www.library.carleton.ca/>  
 520-2735