

# PHIL 2370: Metaphysics and Mind (W'19)

## Course Description

This course is an introduction to some of the most enduring problems in Western analytic metaphysics. We will consider two questions: “What are we?” and “What can we do?” The answers to these questions are far from simple. We need to know what kinds of things exist to say that we are a thing of that kind. We need to know what it means to exist to say that certain things exist. We even need to know why anything exists to say why some things exist and some don't! Similarly, we can't say that we know what we can do if we don't know what parts of our behaviour are under our control. We can't say what is under our control if we don't have a concept of what it means to cause things to happen. And the whole system is challenged if it turns out that time and change are impossible! In short, this course examines some of the questions that are central to the human experience.

## Instructional Support

### Course Logistics

**Prerequisites:** 2.00 credits or (1 of PHIL 1000, 1010, 1030, 1050)  
**Course Times:** Tu, Th 1:00-2:20      **Course Location:** MCKN 231

### Instructor

Name	Email	Office	Hours
Dr. Kyle Bromhall	kbromhal@uoguelph.ca	TBA	TBA

## Required Learning Resources

1. Brian Garrett, *What is this thing called Metaphysics?* 3d. ed. (Routledge)
2. Various articles on electronic reserve.

## Primary Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, a successful student will...

<b>Depth and Breadth of Content</b>	1. Be able to identify many of the perennial problems of Western analytic metaphysics and their mainstream solutions.
<b>Application of Knowledge</b>	2. Be able to discuss and evaluate central arguments about the relation of mind (qua mental states) to action.
<b>Communication Skills</b>	3. Be able to appreciate the interconnected nature metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics.
	4. Analyze complex arguments into standard form, repairing arguments charitably and effectively.
	5. Synthesize difficult passages into a concise, living working set of notes.
	6. Contribute to discussions of the course material.
	7. Develop a thesis and defend it in an analytic research paper.

## Course Assessments

### Course Engagement (10%)

At the end of Weeks 04, 08, and 12, you will complete a self-assessment form about your engagement with the course material. See the specifications for more details.

### Essays (60%)

At the beginning of the term, I will distribute a list of possible topics and questions for your essays.

The first essay is a **response paper** due **Week 06** and is worth **20%** of your final grade. The second essay is a **position paper** due **Week 12** and is worth **30%** of your final grade. See each assignment for its specifications.

The second essay will require you to complete an essay **proposal**, which is due **Week 08** and worth **10%** of your final grade. At this time, you must indicate whether you wish to revise your first essay according to the specifications of the second essay or write a whole new paper. Each option has its benefits and drawbacks; see the specifications for more details.

### Final Examination (30%)

You will write one final examination that is **cumulative** to the **beginning of the course**. Expect mostly multiple choice and longform questions, but no essays. Check WebAdvisor for time and place.

## Revocable Bonuses

### Factfinding Bonus

You will receive a 1.5% bonus to your final grade for putting in the hard work of reading through the Course Outline and/or the Assignment Specifications and/or the Style Guide (as relevant) to find the answers to your questions. This will operate on the honour system, and the only way you can lose this bonus is to prove to me that you haven't read them. You can prove this to me by asking me a question that is explicitly answered in a relevant document.

### Altruism Bonus

Everyone will collectively receive a 1% bonus to their final grades as a reward for someone volunteering to be a note-taker for SAS. Everyone loses this bonus if I am still being contacted by SAS about a volunteer note-taker by Week 03.

### Mercy Token

Each student will receive one virtual "mercy token" which can be exchanged for a 48-hour extension on any assessment other than the final exam—no questions asked. You must contact me to use it. As a bonus, in the last lecture, I will share one multiple choice final exam question for every eight unused tokens held across the course by that time.

## Course Policies

### Preparing and Submitting Your Work

#### How to submit your work

All written work must be submitted through the dropbox function of CourseLink.

You may not submit any work via email, at any time, for any reason.

**A note about file types.** It is strongly recommended that you submit your work in Microsoft Office format (docx, doc), but Portable Document Format (pdf) is begrudgingly acceptable too. *Under no circumstances are you to submit work in the following formats:* Google Docs (gdoc), Apple Pages (pages), or LibreOffice (ott, odt). CourseLink & Turnitin cannot handle these formats, and submissions in these formats will not be accepted.

#### Late penalties

Assignments that are **six hours** late (as indicated by the latest date stamp on dropbox) or less will incur a **5%** penalty. You will know if you are incurring this penalty because dropbox will indicate that your paper is late. Assignments **more than six hours** late are **no longer accepted**; students will receive a **zero** for this component of the course.

#### Extensions

Contact me as soon as you are aware of a problem that may compromise your ability to complete an assignment. The first extension will use up your mercy token and grant you a 48-hour extension. Longer or subsequent extensions will be considered on a case-by-case basis, and will generally only be made on medical, humanitarian, or compassionate grounds. I reserve the right to require evidence for longer or last-minute requests.

#### Assignment specifications

All assignments will have their own specifications; it is imperative that you follow these specifications. Any course requirement listed as an essay must use **Chicago Style (Notes & Bibliography)** for citations. The course Style Guide will help you with this.

#### Turnitin

**The boilerplate.** This university has adopted Turnitin to detect possible plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, or copying as part of the ongoing efforts to maintain academic integrity at the university. All submitted assignments 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 Usage Policy posted on the Turnitin.com site.

**A note about Originality Scores.** When you submit your work to Turnitin, Turnitin will generate an "Originality Score" for your assignment. The Originality Score merely represents the percentage of your paper (by word count) that can be found in other papers in their database. It **does not** indicate how much of your paper is plagiarized.

## Engaging with the Course

### Where to find course-related information

I will use CourseLink extensively. There you will find news items, errata, grades, minor announcements, assignments, the dropbox, and so on. It is your responsibility to check it regularly. If you have a question, you should check there first.

### Accessing readings, assignments, and lectures

All non-textbook readings are on electronic reserve through the library.

All assignments will be posted in PDF on CourseLink.

All lectures will be posted as non-printable PDFs on CourseLink, usually within forty-eight hours. Please do not bug me about this.

### In-lecture technology policies

**Laptops** are allowed in lecture just as long as they are being used for course-related purposes. I reserve the right to take whatever measures necessary to mitigate any problems they cause.

**Smartphones** have no place in the classroom. Refrain from using them. If it is difficult for you to go through the entire class without interacting with your phone, you should seek help. I reserve the right to remove repeat offenders from the lecture.

You may **not** record lectures.

### How to contact me

**Email** is my preferred method of communication outside of class or office hours. I will try my best to respond to your email within a few hours of receiving it, although please understand that circumstances may not always permit this.

I do not answer any emails marked high priority, high importance, or have the word "URGENT" in the title.

## Territorial Acknowledgement

The University of Guelph resides on the ancestral lands of the Attawandaron people and the treaty lands and territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit. We recognize the significance of the Dish with One Spoon Covenant to this land and offer our respect to our Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, and Métis neighbours as we strive to strengthen our relationships with them.

## Course Schedule

*All topics and readings subject to change with notice.*

### Unit One: What are we?

#### Week 01: Metametaphysics

**Focus Question:** “Is metaphysics possible?”

**Focus Source:** Sider, “Metametaphysics”

Textbook Support: N/A

#### Week 02: The existence of God

**Focus Question:** “Why is there something rather than nothing?”

**Focus Source:** Moreland, “The Cosmological Argument”

Textbook Support: TCM, chapter 1

#### Week 03: Possibility, necessity, and actuality

**Focus Question:** “Do unicorns exist?”

**Focus Source:** Lewis, “A Philosophers’ Paradise?”

Textbook Support: TCM, chapter 3, 4

#### Week 04: Objects and properties

**Focus Question:** “What is a sandwich?”

**Focus Source:** Williams, “The Elements of Existence”

Textbook Support: TCM, chapter 5

#### Week 05: Personal identity, I

**Focus Question:** “What is ‘us’?”

**Focus Source:** Parfit, D. *Reasons and Persons*

Textbook Support: TCM, chapter 2

#### Week 06: Personal identity, II

**Focus Question:** “Could there be artificial selves?”

**Focus Source:** Searle, “Minds, Brains, and Programs”

Textbook Support: TCM, chapter 11

## Unit Two: What can we do?

### Week 08: Causation

**Focus Question:** “What causes what?”

**Focus Source:** Anscombe, *Intention*

Textbook Support: TCM, chapter 6

### Week 09: Free will and determinism, I

**Focus Question:** “Must we act?”

**Focus Source:** Frankfurt, “Freedom of the Will and the Concept of the Person”

Textbook Support: TCM, chapter 9

### Week 10: Free will and determinism, II

**Focus Question:** Can we act freely?

**Focus Source:** James, “The Dilemma of Determinism”

Textbook Support: TCM, chapter 10

### Week 11: Space and Time, I

**Focus Question:** “What happens?”

**Focus Source:** McTaggart, “The Unreality of Time”

Textbook Support: TCM, chapter 7

### Week 12: Space and Time, II

**Focus Question:** “What is this thing called time?”

**Focus Source:** Zeno (via Aristotle)

Textbook Support: TCM, chapter 8

### Legend

**TCM** Garrett, Brian. *What is this thing called Metaphysics?* 3d. ed.