

**PHIL 181: Metaphysics**  
**Section 01: MWF 10:00-10:50**  
**Riverside Hall (RVR) 1008**

**Instructor:** Prof. Thomas F. Pyne

**Office Hours:** MWF 11:00-11:50; By Appointment.

**Office Location:** Mendocino 3000

**Phone:** (Office) 278-7288  
(Philosophy Department) 278-6424

**Email:** [pynetf@csus.edu](mailto:pynetf@csus.edu)  
Faculty Website: <http://www.csus.edu/indiv/p/pynetf/>

**Required Text:** [1] Peter Van Inwagen & Dean W. Zimmerman, editors.  
*Metaphysics: The Big Questions*. Second Edition.  
Basil Blackwell (Oxford, 2008). 978-1-4051-2586-4  
[2] "Metaphysics Toolkit"

**SacCT:** <https://online.csus.edu>

**Course Description**

Examines argument concerning the nature of reality. Representative topics include: substance, space, time, God, free will, determinism, identity, universals. Emphasis is on contemporary formulations. **Prerequisite:** 6 units in philosophy or instructor permission. **Units:** 3.0.

**Course Objectives**

- The course is designed to give a systematic introduction to philosophical problems that are *metaphysical*; to show what distinguishes metaphysical problems from other philosophical problems.
- We will then investigate a restricted sampling of metaphysical problems which are under active investigation in the present.
- This investigation will involve study of contributions to the solution of metaphysical problems by contemporary philosophers.
- Finally, the course will require some metaphysical investigation by the student, as well as some writing.

Students will be expected to:

- Demonstrate a developed ability to read and understand contemporary philosophical texts.
- Evaluate critically the concepts and arguments contained in the texts;
- Write argumentative papers applying philosophical concepts and reasoning to issues in metaphysics;

Students will demonstrate their achievement of the course objectives and expectations through:

- Reading comprehension quizzes on each reading assignment;
- Exams which test for a deeper understanding of metaphysical issues, as well as of the arguments for or against the different sides; students will show their understanding via essay answers;
- Participation in in-class and online discussion;
- Composition of argumentative papers on assigned topics in metaphysics.
- PHIL 181: Metaphysics is the department-designated class for information competency assessment of Philosophy majors. Thus the assignments will be designed to assess your ability to use information resources like the library resources, databases, reference works, etc.

### **Course Delivery**

While PHIL 181 will be in most ways a standard lecture/discussion class, it will be 'web-assisted.' That is, we will be using some features of the SacCT course management system.

SacCT is a program designed for on-line college courses. Among other things, it serves as a location for course material, lecture notes, tests, papers, and discussions.

I will make important course content available, including lecture notes and other supplementary material.

You will be taking quizzes and exams, participating in discussions, and submitting papers through SacCT. In addition, you may communicate with me, as well as with other students in the class, through the SacCT Mail facility.

### ***Access the Course***

You will use your Saclink account to log into the course from the [SacCT Login page](https://online.csus.edu) (<https://online.csus.edu>).

If you do not have a Saclink account yet, please refer to the [Setting Up a Saclink Account](http://www.csus.edu/saclink/settingUp.stm) webpage (<http://www.csus.edu/saclink/settingUp.stm>) to create a saclink account online.

To get started using SacCT, visit the [Student Resources](http://www.csus.edu/webct/student/) webpage (<http://www.csus.edu/webct/student/>) where you can access Online Tutorials, Frequently Asked Questions, and other help resources.

## ***Communications***

The course will use the communication tools built into SacCT:

- Announcements: It's a good idea to check for announcements from time to time during the semester
- Mail: You may send me (or a classmate) a message via the 'Mail' function. I will respond promptly. (I can't vouch for the classmate.)
- Discussions: You will be expected to participate in discussions, whether in class or through the 'Discussions' function in SacCT.
- Calendar: Exams and due dates for papers will all appear in the Calendar.

## ***Technical Requirements***

To access a course in SacCT you will need access to the Internet and an internet browser (Internet Explorer, Firefox, Safari). To ensure that you are using a supported browser and have required plug-ins please run the Check Browser from your SacCT course. Refer to the [SacCT Browser Tune-up](#) page for instructions.

For help or to report a problem with SacCT you can:

- Visit the [Student SacCT FAQ's webpage](#)
- Submit a [SacCT Problem Form](#)
- Contact the University Help Desk at (916) 278-7337

## ***Work for the Course***

### 1. Quizzes on Reading Assignments (10%)

You will be responsible for the readings assigned for a particular class day. While you will be responsible for the whole reading, I may indicate in the 'Schedule' (below) that you should pay particular attention to some part of it. As a result, it may happen that other parts will not be treated in class. You will be responsible for them anyway, and I will respond to questions regarding them.

The quiz for a given reading assignment must be taken by the beginning of the class period for which it is assigned.

I will open the window for the reading assignment about a week in advance; the window will close at class time.

2. Midterm Exam (15%) The midterm will be combination of multiple-choice, fill-in, true/false questions, plus some essay questions. The questions will be on the readings, lectures, and discussions up to that point.
3. Final Exam (15%) Same as the midterm. The final will cover all the readings, lectures, and discussions since the midterm.

4. First Paper (4 pages) (15%)  
See **'Paper Topics'** below.
5. Second Paper (4-7 pages) (15%)  
See **'Paper Topics'** below.
6. Third Paper (7-10 pages) (15%)  
See **'Paper Topics'** below.
6. Discussion Contributions (10%)  
You will be expected to make regular contributions to discussion, either in the class period itself or in the online 'Discussion' conducted in SacCT.

### ***Assignment Submission Instructions***

#### ***Papers***

Papers will be submitted in SacCT.

In writing the paper, follow the instructions for argumentative papers found in the "Guidelines for Writing Philosophy Papers" at the Philosophy Department website: <http://www.csus.edu/phil/WritingGuidelines&GradingStandardsforPapers.htm>

To submit a paper in SacCT:

- Enter SacCT at <https://online.csus.edu>.
- Open the main page for PHIL 181.
- Open 'Assignments' (under 'Course Tools' on the left margin).
- Open the correct assignment; you will see the text of the assignment itself as well as the due date and time.
- You will see a space for the paper – don't use that. (Some students, operating on the 'belt *and* suspenders' principle, paste their paper into that space just in case. That's fine. But you don't have to.)
- Click on the 'Attachment' button.
- Attach your paper as an *editable* file that will open in Microsoft Word (*not* a .pdf or .htm file); if you're unsure, attach it as a 'text' (.txt) or 'rich text' (.rtf); those options are available in all word-processing programs.
- Late papers will be lowered a grade increment for every day past the due date. I leave the window open for submitting a paper for five days after its due date. After that the paper will not be accepted.

#### ***Discussions***

Philosophy involves discussion and argument. It's the best way to explore philosophical questions, the best way to learn how to philosophize. So I will expect you to participate in the discussions. You will either receive full credit for participation (10%) or no credit,

depending on how seriously you take your responsibility to make contributions. If I notice that you are not participating, I will let you know that I expect more.

To participate in an online discussion:

- Enter SacCT;
- Open 'Discussions' (under 'Course Tools' on the left margin');
- Click on one of the topics; you will be able to read the other contributions;
- You can contribute to the discussion by clicking 'Create Message'.

### ***Online Quizzes/Exams***

**Reading Quizzes:** There will be a reading quiz on every assignment. A reading quiz will consist of five to ten multiple-choice questions designed so that a careful reader should be able to answer them. The quiz will 'open' a week before it is due; it will 'close' at the beginning of the first class period in which the reading will be discussed.

To take a reading quiz in SacCT:

Enter SacCT at <https://online.csus.edu>;

- Open the main page for PHIL 181;
- Open 'Assessments' (under 'Course Tools' on the left margin of the main page);
- Answer the questions (make sure you 'submit' each question as well as the entire exam).

You will have only one chance to take the quiz, so check your answers before submitting.

**Exams:** The exam window will open about five days before it is due. You must take the exam during that time.

To take an exam in SacCT, follow the instructions for taking a reading quiz. The difference between an exam and a quiz will be length, difficulty, and time. You will have 75 minutes to take the midterm, two hours (120 minutes) to take the final. In addition, each individual question will have a time limit.

### ***Grading***

**Exams:** Exams will receive numerical grades; your score will be 'out of' 100.

**Papers:** Papers will receive letter grades. To determine your final grade, I will convert those letter grades into the highest number in the grade range under 'Grading Criteria' below. (For example, a B grade on a paper converts to 89.)

**Reading Quizzes:** Reading quizzes will receive a grade of **2** (full credit), **1** (inadequate comprehension), or **0** (not taken). An average of **1.7** or above will receive full credit (100). Lower scores will be prorated.

**Discussion:** Discussion participation will receive either complete credit (100) or none (0). I will warn you if I deem your discussion contribution inadequate.

**Final Grade:** The final grade for the course will be determined by the weighted sum of the exams, quizzes, discussion, and papers.

### ***Grading Criteria***

<b>Scaled Score</b>	<b>Letter Equivalent</b>
100-94	A
93-92	A-
91-90	B+
89-84	B
83-82	B-
81-80	C+
79-74	C
73-72	C-
71-70	D+
69-64	D
63-62	D-
61-	F

### ***Viewing Grades in SacCT***

For reading quizzes you will be able to see your score as soon as you have submitted your quiz.

For exams, and papers I will post the grades as soon as I have finished grading them. You can see your grades during the semester by going to 'MyGrades' in SacCT.

## **Course Policies**

### **Attendance**

I expect attendance at every class meeting. If for some excellent reason you cannot make class, let me know – preferably in advance. If this is impossible, let me know by 5:00 on the day you miss, preferably by an e-mail message within SacCT. I will lower you a grade increment for every absence in which you fail to contact me the same day.

Class meetings will begin at 10:00 am with a calling of the roll. Be on time. Anticipate. Excuses don't cut it: I will treat a pattern of late arrival as an unexcused absence.

I expect attention to the material during class periods. If there is a class discussion, I will serve as moderator; please wait to be recognized before making a contribution.

If you wish to ask a question, answer a question, or make a contribution to the class, please ask to be recognized. There is no excuse for conducting a private discussion during class time. I will treat a pattern of talking in class as an unexcused absence.

### **Make-Up Exams**

Since you may take exams at your convenience, there will be no make-up exams. The opening and closing dates and times for exams will be listed in the calendar.

### ***Late Work***

For papers, I will leave the assignment window open for five days after the due date. The grade will be lowered a grade increment for every day it's late.

## **University Policies**

### ***Academic Honesty***

Students are expected to be familiar with the University's Academic Honesty, Policy & Procedures. The policy on Academic Honesty and other information regarding student conduct can be accessed from the [University Policy Manual](http://www.csus.edu/umannual/index.htm) (<http://www.csus.edu/umannual/index.htm>).

The University Library has a helpful treatment of plagiarism at <http://library.csus.edu/content2.asp?pageID=353>.

The University has very helpful information on plagiarism at the [Library's Plagiarism Website](#).

### ***Reasonable Accommodation Policy***

If you have a disability and require accommodations, you need to provide disability documentation to Services for Students with Disabilities (SSWD). For more information please visit the [SSWD website](http://www.csus.edu/sswd/) (<http://www.csus.edu/sswd/>). They are located in Lassen Hall 1008 and can be contacted by phone at (916) 278-6955 (Voice) (916) 278-7239 (TDD only) or via email at [sswd@csus.edu](mailto:sswd@csus.edu).

Please discuss your accommodation needs with me after early in the semester. Don't wait until the first exam or paper.

## University Resources

### *The CSUS Writing Center*

The Writing Center provides encouraging, focused, and non-judgmental one-to-one tutorials in writing. Their tutors can help with writing at all points in the process, from initial planning and organizing through developing and revising a paper. You can bring the assignment to them for help.

### ***Sac State Library***

The Sac State Library's webpage is <http://library.csus.edu>.

To find a book or periodical, click on "Eureka: Library Catalogue" under "Resources and Collections" or go directly to <http://eureka.lib.csus.edu/>

For a largely undergraduate institution, the Sac State library's holdings and resources in philosophy are pretty good. I particularly recommend Sac State librarian Lisa Roberts' website "Philosophy: Resources." Two ways to find it: through "Research Guides" under "Resources and Collections", or go directly to <http://library.csus.edu/guides/robertsl/philoguide.htm>

### ***Student Computing Labs***

To access SacCT from campus, or use any of the other campus online resources, you can use the IRT managed student computer labs on campus. See [University Labs website](http://www.csus.edu/uccs/labs/generalinfo/about.stm), that is, <http://www.csus.edu/uccs/labs/generalinfo/about.stm> for information about locations, hours, and resources available.

### ***SacCT***

SacCT is the course management system used on the Sac State campus for web-assisted courses. To access a course on SacCT, you must login from the [SacCT Login Page](https://online.csus.edu) (<https://online.csus.edu>).

To learn more about SacCT visit the [Student Resources](http://www.csus.edu/WebCT/student/) webpage (<http://www.csus.edu/WebCT/student/>) where you can view online Tutorials, FAQ's and other help resources.

## Course Schedule

<b>Introduction: Metaphysical Questions Among Philosophical Questions</b> What we are supplying are really remarks on the natural history of human beings; we are not contributing curiosities however, but observations which no one has doubted, but which have escaped remark only because they are always before our eyes. <i>Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations</i>			
Week	Topic	Readings	Due Dates
<b>Week 1</b> <b>M 8/31</b>  <b>W 9/2</b>  <b>F 9/4</b>	M: Introduction, What is a Philosophical Question? Which Philosophical Questions are Metaphysical? W: What Is It to 'Countenance' an Entity? Plato's Beard and Ockham's Razor F: Solutions to Plato's Beard	M: "Introduction," 1-7; "Metaphysics Toolkit"  W: Quine, "On What There Is," 28-40 F: [Lecture]	M:  W: Reading Quiz 1: Quine, "On What There Is" F:
<b>Week 2</b> <b>M 9/7</b>  <b>W 9/9</b>  <b>F 9/11</b>	M: Solutions to Plato's Beard (Cont.) W: The Earliest Metaphysicians: Parmenides and Zeno  F: Is Space Discrete or Continuous?	M: [Lecture]  W: Lewis, "Holes," 22-28  F: Black, "Achilles and the Tortoise," 186-195	M: Reading Quiz 2: Lewis, "Holes" W:  F: Reading Quiz 3: Black, "Achilles and the Tortoise"
<b>Part I: The Nature of Space and Time</b> 6.4312 The solution of the riddle of life in space and time lies <i>outside</i> space and time. <i>Wittgenstein, Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus</i>			
<b>Week 3</b> <b>M 9/14</b>  <b>W 9/16</b>  <b>F 9/18</b>	M: Are There Any Actual Infinities?  W: Is Space Substantial or Relational? F: Is Space Three Dimensional?	M: Salmon, "A Contemporary Look at Zeno's Paradoxes," 195-215 W: Martin Gardner, "The Fourth Dimension," 165-168 F: Van Cleve, "Incongruent Counterparts and Higher Dimensions," 168-175	M: Reading Quiz 4: Salmon  W: Reading Quiz 5: Gardner F: Reading Quiz 6: Van Cleve
<b>Week 4</b> <b>M 9/21</b>	M: What Must Be in the World for Anything to be 'Left' or	M: [Lecture]	M: <b>Paper 1 due 11:30 pm.</b>

<b>W 9/23</b> <b>F 9/25</b>	'Right' of Anything Else? W: The Unreality of Time F: McTaggart (Cont.)	W: McTaggart, from <i>The Nature of Existence</i> , 116-123 F: McTaggart, from <i>The Nature of Existence</i> , 116-123	W: Reading Quiz 7: McTaggart F:
<b>Week 5</b> <b>M 9/28</b>  <b>W 9/30</b>   <b>F 10/2</b>	M: Objections to McTaggart's Argument  W: Is There Anything Special about the Present?  F: A Tenseless World	M: Broad, "McTaggart's Arguments...", 124-131  W: Prior, "Changes in Events and Changes in Things," 131-141; C.D. Broad, "The General Problem of Time and Change," 144-149 F: Williams, "The Myth of Passage," 149-161	M: Reading Quiz 8: Broad, "McTaggart's Arguments..." W: Reading Quiz 9: Prior, "Changes in Events...", and Broad, "The General Problem..." F: Reading Quiz 10: Williams, "The Myth of Passage"
<b>Week 6</b> <b>M 10/5</b>	M: "Thank Heavens, <i>That's</i> Over!"	M: Prior, "Some Free Thinking About Time," 161-165	M: Reading Quiz 11: Prior, "Some Free Thinking about Time"
<b>Part II: The Furniture of Reality</b> 1.1 The World is the totality of facts, not of things. Wittgenstein, <i>Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus</i>			
<b>W 10/7</b>          <b>F 10/9</b>	W: The Problem of Universals: <i>Universalia ante Res</i> ; <i>Universalia in Rebus</i> F: Nominalism and Other Forms of Reduction	W: ["Metaphysics Toolkit"; Van Inwagen & Zimmerman, 'Introduction,' 7-13  F: Armstrong, "Universals and Attributes," 59-67	W: Reading Quiz 12: "Metaphysics Toolkit," Van Inwagen & Zimmerman  F: Reading Quiz 13: Armstrong, "Universals and Attributes" <b>Window for Exam 1 opens Friday October 9, 11:00 am and remains open until Friday, October 16, 10:00 am.</b>
<b>Week 7</b> <b>M 10/12</b>   <b>W 10/14</b>	M: Resemblance v. <i>Universalia in Rebus</i>  W: Trope Theory	M: H.H. Price, "Universals and Resemblances," 67-84  W: D.C. Williams, "The Elements of Being," 84-96	M: Reading Quiz 14: Price, "Universals and Resemblances" W: Reading Quiz 15: Williams, "The

<b>F 10/16</b>	F: Trope Theory (Cont.)	F: D.C. Williams, "The Elements of Being," 84-96	Elements of Being" F: <b>Window for Exam 1 closes 10:00 am</b>
<b>Week 8</b> <b>M 10/19</b> <b>W 10/21</b>	M: The Problem of Individuals W: Leibniz's Principle	M: [Lecture] W: Max Black, "The Identity of Indiscernibles," 96-105	M: W: Reading Quiz 16: Black, "Identity of Indiscernibles"
<b>F 10/23</b>	F: Leibniz's Principle (cont.)	F: Max Black, "The Identity of Indiscernibles," 96-105	F:
<b>Week 9</b> <b>M 10/26</b>	M: The Two Spheres Problem Updated	M: Zimmerman, "Distinct Indiscernibles and the Bundle Theory," 105-111	M: Reading Quiz 17: Zimmerman, "Distinct Indiscernibles"
<b>W 10/28</b>	W: The Two Spheres Problem Updated (Cont.)	W: Zimmerman, "Distinct Indiscernibles and the Bundle Theory," 105-111	W:
<b>Part III: Identity</b>			
<b>Identity Through Change</b> 6.371 The whole modern conception of the world is founded on the illusion that the so-called laws of nature are the explanations of natural phenomena. Wittgenstein, <i>Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus</i>			
<b>F 10/30</b>	F: The Ship of Theseus	F: [Lecture]	F: <b>Paper 2 due 11:30 pm.</b>
<b>Week 10</b> <b>M 11/2</b>	M: The 'Error Theory' of Identity Through Change	M: Arnauld and Nicole, "Of Confused Subjects which are Equivalent to Two Subjects..." 239-241	M: Reading Quiz 18: Arnauld & Nicole, "Of Confused Subjects"
<b>W 11/4</b>	W: The Range of Alternatives	W: Olson, "The Paradox of Increase," 241-263	W: Reading Quiz 19: Olson, "Paradox of Increase"
<b>F 11/6</b>	F: Can Objects Change by gaining or losing parts?	F: Olson, "The Paradox of Increase," 241-263	F:
<b>Identity Through Time</b>			
<b>Week 11</b> <b>M 11/9</b>	M: How Do Objects Persist Through Time (If They Do)?	M: Quine, "Identity, Ostension, and Hypostasis," 263-265	M: Reading Quiz 20: Quine, "Identity"
<b>W 11/11</b>	W: Four-Dimensional Timeslices	W: Lewis, "In Defense of Stages," 265-267; Lewis, "The Problem of Temporary Intrinsic," 267-269	W: Reading Quiz 21: Lewis
<b>F 11/13</b>	F: The Ontological Importance of the Present	F: Zimmerman, "Temporary Intrinsic and Presentism," 269-281	F: Reading Quiz 22: Zimmerman

**Part IV: Realism and Anti-Realism**

4. 2211 Even if the world is infinitely complex, so that every fact consists of infinitely many states of affairs and every state of affairs is composed of infinitely many objects, even so there must be objects and states of affairs.

Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*

You can't get behind the rules, because there isn't any *behind*.

Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Grammar*

<b>Week 12</b> <b>M 11/16</b>	M: What is 'Realism'?	M: [Lecture]	M:
<b>W 11/18</b>	W: The Inscrutability of Reference and Ontological Relativity	W: Putnam, "After Metaphysics, What?" 547-552; Putnam, "Truth and Convention," 552-558	W: Reading Quiz 23: Putnam
<b>F 11/21</b>	F: Putnam's 'Internal' Realism	F:	F:
<b>Week 13</b> <b>M 11/23</b>	M: Ontological Differences	M: Sosa, "Nonabsolute Existence and Conceptual Relativity," 558-566; Sosa, "Addendum to "Nonabsolute Existence and Conceptual Relativity," 566-568	M: Reading Quiz 24: Sosa
<b>W 11/25</b>	W: Conceptual Relativism	W:	W:
<b>F 11/27</b>	Thanksgiving Holiday (Campus closed – No class)	F:	F:
<b>Week 14</b> <b>M 11/30</b>	M: Sosa's Conceptual Relativism (Cont.)	M: Sosa, "Nonabsolute Existence and Conceptual Relativity," 558-566; Sosa, "Addendum to "Nonabsolute Existence and Conceptual Relativity," 566-568	M:
<b>W 12/2</b>	W: What About Good Old Aristotelian Hylomorphism?	W: [Lecture]	W:
<b>F 12/4</b>	F: Paper Workshop	F: [Discussion on papers]	F:
<b>Week 15</b> <b>M 12/7</b>	M: : Realism Re-Asserted Realism (Cont.)	M: [Lecture]	M:
<b>W 12/9</b>	W:	W: [Lecture]	W:
<b>F 12/11</b>	F: Concluding Lecture	F: [Lecture]	F:
<b>Finals Week</b> <b>M 12/14</b>	M:	M:	M: <b>Final exam window opens 8:00 am (Closes Friday, 10:00 am)</b>

<b>W 12/16</b>	W:	W:	W: <b>Final exam window closes 12:15 pm</b>
<b>F 12/19</b>	F:	F:	F: <b>Paper 3 due 11:30 pm</b>

*The descriptions and due dates are subject to change for pedagogical reasons.*

### ***Paper Topics***

#### **Paper 1 (due Monday, September 21, 11:30 pm)**

(4 pages)

Given what we have discussed in Metaphysics class thus far...

Choose an entity (or category of entity) which is widely believed to exist, but which you do not countenance.

The paper should consider the following points:

- Why do some people countenance it? That is, what role does it play in their ontology? (No disparaging psychological diagnoses: give their reasons);
- Why do you not accept it? Give your argument for its nonexistence;
- On your account, what takes its place, or plays its role in your ontology? (Alternatively, explain why nothing need play that role.)
- Where did the believers go wrong? What motivates your superior view of the matter?

Do not write on Santa Claus, UFOs, Bigfoot, or anything like that. They don't raise *metaphysical* problems.

#### **Paper 2 (due Friday, October 30, 11:30 pm)**

(4-7 pages)

Give your account of Max Black's "Two Spheres" problem, presented in his essay, "The Identity of Indiscernibles" and updated in Zimmerman's "Distinct Indiscernibles and the Bundle Theory".

Comment in particular on the following:

- Black and Zimmerman clearly believe that the 'Two Spheres' thought experiment shows that the Identity of Indiscernibles is false: A world containing two spheres with all and only the same properties is a possible world.

Do you agree?

If so, what theory of individuals do you favor instead, and for what reasons?

If not, where do Black's and Zimmerman's arguments fail?

b) Are there any properties by which the sphere(s) a and b can be distinguished? If so, what properties are they?

**Paper 3 (due Friday, December 19, 11:30 pm)**

(7-10 pages)

Take on a metaphysical problem of your own choosing and write a scholarly argumentative paper.

It doesn't have to be one we've studied in class.

Clear your topic with me first.

**Good luck in all your courses this semester!**