

Fall 2026

PHILOSOP 9225: Scientific Realism

AREA:

Science

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Scientific realism is, roughly, the position that the theoretical posits of science should be taken literally, even if they seem to refer to things that are not directly observable, and that acceptance of a scientific theory involves acceptance of these posits as really existing. It is contrasted with various forms of anti-realism, including an instrumentalist view according to which a scientific theory should be taken to be no more than a systematic way of relating observable phenomena. Discussions about scientific realism, pro and con, have occupied a major part of philosophy of science during the past 50 years, and the discussion continues. This course is an introduction to those discussions. Readings will include some of the influential contributions to these discussions.