

WESTERN UNIVERSITY
Department of Philosophy
Undergraduate Course Outline 2026-27

PHILOSOP 2600G
Introduction to Metaphysics

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Information including instructor contact details and course location can be found on the course Owl BrightSpace: <https://westernu.brightspace.com/>

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course addresses the most important questions in metaphysics: What is a human being? Do we have free will? How does the mind relate to the body? In what respect do things persist through change? Are there abstract objects? What is the nature of space, time, and causality?

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- (1) Gain an understanding of central issues and positions in contemporary metaphysics
- (2) Think carefully about the significance of metaphysical questions
- (3) Develop ability to identify and assess arguments
- (4) Practice reading and critically evaluating philosophical texts
- (5) Enhance philosophical writing skills

COURSE SCHEDULE

The course will be broken into three main units:

Personal Identity: What does it take for a person to continue to exist, rather than cease to exist? What makes you the same person that you were yesterday? If you were to change drastically—for example, by losing all of your memories, or having your brain transplanted into a different body, would you still be *you*?

Material Constitution: What are material objects? What does it mean to say that an object is *constituted* by something else? For example, what is the relationship between a statue and the lump of clay out of which it is formed? Are they identical or distinct? If I gradually replace the clay bit by bit, is it still the same statue, or did a new statue come into existence at some point?

Social Groups: What is the difference between social and non-social entities? What are social groups? What is the nature of gender and racial categories? What does it mean to say that something is socially constructed? Does it make sense to say that a social group has beliefs, forms intentions, or performs actions?

We may have time to briefly consider some other topics in metaphysics, depending on student interest. Some examples of potential additional topics include the existence of God, the distinction between concrete and abstract objects, and the nature of time.

TEXTS

The schedule of reading assignments will be available on the OWL Brightspace site

METHOD OF EVALUATION

Two in-class midterm exams with multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions (25% each)

Cumulative final exam with multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions (30%)

Three short reading responses (5% each)

Attendance and participation (5%)

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY POLICIES

The Department of Philosophy policies that govern the conduct, standards, and expectations for student participation in Philosophy courses are available in the Undergraduate section of the Department of Philosophy website <http://uwo.ca/philosophy/undergraduate/policies.html> .

It is your responsibility to understand the policies set out by the Senate and the Department of Philosophy, and thus ignorance of these policies cannot be used as grounds of appeal.

AUDIT

Students wishing to audit the course should consult with the instructor prior to or during the first week of classes.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES

No electronic devices or aids of any kind will be permitted during the in-class assessments or the final exam.

STATEMENT ON THE USE OF GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

In this course, the use of any generative AI (e.g. automatic translation tools, grammar checkers, ChatGPT...) is prohibited. If unauthorized AI use is suspected, the instructor will ask for research notes, rough drafts, essay outlines, and other materials used in preparing assignments. Students are expected to **retain** these materials until after final grades have been entered. In the unlikely event of concerns being raised about the authenticity of any assignment, students may be asked to produce these materials; an inability to do so may weigh heavily against them. The point of the assignments and activities is to help you practice thinking; you waste everyone's time if you outsource that to an LLM. Please feel free to reach out at any point in the semester (the sooner the better) if you have any questions concerning which tools are appropriate to use in support of your academic writing.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION AND ACCESSIBLE EDUCATION

Academic Accommodation is "a means of adjusting the academic activities associated with a course or program of student in order to permit students with disabilities to participate in those activities at the University and to fulfill the essential requirements of a course or program."

<https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academicpolicies/appeals/Academic%20Accommodationdisabilities.pdf>. Students with disabilities are encouraged to register with Accessible Education at

the earliest opportunity. “Accessible Education plays a central role in Western's efforts to ensure that its academic programs are accessible for all students”

https://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/index.html

SPECIAL EXAMINATIONS

A Special Examination is any examination other than the regular examination, and it may be offered only with the permission of the Dean of the Faculty in which the student is registered, in consultation with the instructor and Department Chair. Permission to write a Special Examination may be given on the basis of compassionate or medical grounds with appropriate supporting documents. To provide an opportunity for students to recover from the circumstances resulting in a Special Examination, the University has implemented Special Examinations dates. These dates as well as other important information about examinations and academic standing can be found [here](#).

ACADEMIC CONSIDERATION

Students may request academic consideration in cases of extenuating circumstances – that is, personal circumstances beyond the student’s control that have a substantial but temporary impact on the student’s ability to meet essential academic requirements.

1. Requests for academic consideration are made to the Academic Advising office of Faculty in which the student is registered.
2. Requests for academic consideration include the following components:
 - a. Self-attestation signed by the student;
 - b. Indication of the course(s) and assessment(s) relevant to the request;
 - c. Supporting documentation as relevant

Requests without supporting documentation are limited to one per term per course.

Documentation for medical illness, when required, includes the completion of a [Western Student Medical Certificate \(SMC\)](#) or, where that is not possible, equivalent documentation, by a health care practitioner. Requests linked to examinations scheduled by the Office of the Registrar during official examination periods as well as practice laboratory and performance tests typically scheduled in the last week of term always require formal supporting documentation.

Policy on Academic Consideration – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs

RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION

Western’s Policy on Accommodation for Religious Holidays can be found here:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_religious.pdf.

In the case of mid-term tests, notification is to be “given in writing to the instructor as early as possible, but not later than **one week** prior to the writing of the test”.

COURSE ASSIGNMENT

The last day of scheduled classes in any course will be the last day on which course assignments will be accepted for credit in a course. Instructors will be required to return assignments to students as promptly as possible with reasonable explanations of the instructor's assessment of the assignment.

SCHOLASTIC OFFENCES

Scholastic offences are taken seriously, and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

[https://www.uwo.ca/biology/pdfs/undergraduate/rights-and-responsibilities/scholastic_discipline .pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/biology/pdfs/undergraduate/rights-and-responsibilities/scholastic_discipline.pdf)

ACADEMIC ADVISING

Your Home Faculty's Academic Advising Office will support or refer whenever you have an issue that is affecting your studies, including information on adding/dropping courses, academic considerations for absences, appeals, exam conflicts, and many other academic related matters. Do not hesitate to reach out to them if you are struggling and unsure where to go for help. Contact info for all Faculties is here:

https://registrar.uwo.ca/faculty_academic_counselling.html

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western (<https://uwo.ca/health/>) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help. Immediate help in the event of a crisis can be had by phoning 519.661.3030 (during class hours) or 519.433.2023 after class hours and on weekends (24/7 availability).

GENDER-BASED AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Western University [is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence](#) (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website: <https://www.uwo.ca/health/gbsv/index.html>. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.