

WESTERN UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
Undergraduate Course Outline 2017-18

Philosophy Course Number: PHIL 2300
Philosophy of Science

Winter Term
Monday – 2:30-4:30
Wednesday – 2:30-3:30
AHB 2B04

Instructor: Eric Desjardins
Office: Stv. Hall 2137,
Office Hours: TBA
edesjar3@uwo.ca

DESCRIPTION

This introduction to philosophy of science explores how philosophical questions are linked to sciences. Over the course of the semester we will look at examples of success and failures in science and reflect on issues such as: What are the aims of science? What demarcates science from pseudoscience? Does science progress? Are sciences unified? How historical and social contexts affect the work of scientists? These questions will be explored through wide range of topics that became the center of attention in the natural and social sciences, including climate change, evolution, genetics, race, biodiversity, the Copernican revolution, medical research priorities, and the place of women in science.

TEXTS

1. Barker, G. and Kitcher, P. (2013) *Philosophy of Science: A New Introduction*, Oxford University Press (Required, available at Bookstore)
2. Extra material available online or on OWL (see course syllabus)

OBJECTIVES

This course is designed to immerse students in a wide range of scientific disciplines and philosophical issues arising within them. Yet, no prior background in science is necessary. Only a willingness to engage in philosophical reflection and a curiosity to explore science from different viewpoints is required. At the end of this course, students will have a broad understanding of some of the core questions that marked the history of philosophy of science. Students will discover the fascinating and thriving world of philosophy of science through engaging and structured in-class discussions. This course is thus a great opportunity for students to develop advanced critical thinking and communicative skills, including 1) identifying, evaluating, and formulating philosophical issues related to diverse scientific inquiries, 2) writing balanced and well-supported argumentative essays, 3) leading a focused discussion on issues related to reading materials, and 4) presenting and challenging ideas in a respectful and constructive way.

REQUIREMENTS

The final grade will be based upon the following scheme:

1. **Mid-term paper** (6-8 pages) on an issue of your choice discussed during the first half of the course. Due by the end of week 7. (30%) Make sure to look at the guideline for writing philosophical paper on OWL.
2. **Term paper** (10-12 pages) on an issue of your choice discussed during the second half of the semester. Due by the last day of regular class. (40%) Make sure to look at the guideline for writing philosophical paper on OWL.
3. **Issue of the week**
Every Wednesday a new topic will be introduced by the instructor. Students will then have to read the material related to the topic and formulate an interesting and engaging issue for the discussion that will take place the following Monday. The issue you formulate should show that you have engaged with the readings. **Your issue must be sent to the instructor (by email) by Sunday evening.** (10%)
4. **Participation**
Each Monday will be devoted to a group discussion based on issues arising from the reading materials and the topic introduced the previous Wednesday. Active participation in these discussions is mandatory. (20%)

AUDIT

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

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY POLICIES

The **Department of Philosophy Policies** which govern the conduct, standards, and expectations for student participation in Philosophy courses is available in the Undergraduate section of the Department of Philosophy website at <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.

ACCOMMODATION

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Office of the Dean of the student's Faculty of registration, together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested. The UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness and further information regarding this policy can be found at http://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf.

ACADEMIC 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 http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

PLAGIARISM CHECKING

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com <http://www.turnitin.com>.

SUPPORT SERVICES

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Student Development Centre <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> 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.