

# Metaphysics

Philosophy 3601F | Section 550 | Fall of 2022 (in person)

**Instructor:** Dr. Jonathan P. Marsh

**Office:** Lucas Annex of Lucas Alumni House

**Email:** [jmarsh26@uwo.ca](mailto:jmarsh26@uwo.ca)

**Office Hour:** TBA

Please allow 24 hours for replies

**Meeting Place:** HC-W108, on Wednesdays, 6:30 PM - 9:30 PM.

## Description

This class will investigate a series of controversies about the WORLD. But that is a big subject matter and so we will break our discussion down into three units.

**Unit 1, "The Way the World is"**, is mostly about THINGS — whether there are any, what sorts of things there are, whether anything can exist without minds, and how things can possibly change. This will lead us to the problem of temporary intrinsics and other disputes re: PROPERTIES of things.

**Unit 2, "Why the World is"**, compares two of the most influential metaphysical accounts of existence of the world, viz., theism and naturalism.

**Unit 3, "The Inhabitants the World"**, deals with a specific kind of thing: PERSONS. Its driving problems concern FREE WILL, CAUSAL POWERS, PERSONAL IDENTITY and the metaphysics of MIND.

Course Weight: 0.50.

3.0 hours

CATEGORY B

**Prerequisite(s):** Third or Fourth year standing in a Philosophy module or permission of the instructor.

## Technical Requirements



Internet connection

(for accessing assignment instructions and submitting assignments via OWL etc.)



Laptop or desktop



Working microphone



Working webcam

(online meetings are not anticipated, but do see the appendix below re: "pandemic contingency")

## Methods

Teaching methods include dialogues, videos, crowdsourcing, work sessions and tutorials.

## Text

**Van Inwagen, P. Metaphysics**. Fourth Edition. 2014. Westview Press. ISBN-10: 0813349346.

Available for purchase online through a seller of the student's choice.

Supplementary readings will be made available on OWL.

### **Aims/Outcomes**

By the end of the semester, every committed student will

#### KNOWLEDGE

- **A1.** be acquainted with — and have participated in — some of the major traditional and contemporary controversies in metaphysics. These include so-called
  - (i) *ontological controversies* re: “what there is” (where the existence of X is in question),
  - (ii) *explanatory controversies* re: the nature of X (where it isn’t),
  - (iii) *meta-metaphysical controversies*, such as whether practitioners of metaphysics should consult, or at least be constrained by, science and/or “common sense”



Students will also

#### ATTITUDES

- **A2.** appreciate the significant diversity of opinion in metaphysics, both classical and contemporary, Eastern and Western, and be inclined to respond to different cosmological stories and worldviews with a spirit of intellectual openness and a willingness to follow arguments wherever they may lead.

#### DEVELOPMENT

- **A4.** have presented and defended their own thoughts on a core controversy in metaphysics, with a sustained argument, with the goal of moving a discussion forward, after having overviewed the relevant professional literature.

#### SKILLS

- **A5.** have cultivated intellectual virtues pertaining to argumentation, dialogue, interpretation, research, and clear writing (to help with outcomes 1-4).

### **Evaluative Requirements**

<b>Assignments</b>	<b>Values</b>	<b>Due Dates</b>	<b>Aims [see above]</b>
• 1. Active & Informed Participation	20%	Weekly [w/ short written components]	1-5
• 2. Research paper	30%	Oct 25 ( <b>option A</b> ) <i>or</i> Nov 25 ( <b>option B</b> )	1, 4 & 5
• 3. Exam	30%	December exam period (Date: TBA)	1 & 5
• 4. Presentation (Group dialogue)	20%	Dates TBA	1-5

**Active & Informed Participation (20%)** This is a conversational course, not a lecture course. As such, its success will be largely determined by the quality of the comments of its members. Students are, accordingly, expected to take the following active measures to advance the discussion. Such measures include:

- (a) being attentive
- (b) knowing and thoughtfully engaging the assigned readings
- (c) applying the tools and virtues associated with critical thinking (e.g., careful argumentation, open-mindedness, reflective questioning, virtuous disagreement, and active listening),
- (d) following the College's student conduct requirements and any course-specific policies (see OWL), including our **attendance policy** as well as our strict **no recording policy** (which helps protect student privacy and confidentiality),
- (e) not using one's laptop/cellphone or talking while other students are presenting ideas (see the appendix below for the College's statement on **use of electronic devices**.)
- (f) being reliably present (this includes avoiding a post-midterm attendance nosedive)
- (g) following OWL's **weekly checklist** (which may ask you to **(i)** submit typed questions and **(ii)** informally present the thesis of your research paper to the class for friendly feedback)

- (h) submitting all required participation comments, via OWL's forum, when prompted
  - These typically 1-3 sentence assignments will be briefly worked on in class and cannot be submitted late, from outside the classroom, or by a surrogate submitter (e.g., a group member/classmate). Nor will the questions be circulated ahead of time.

**Research Paper (30%):** It is important for upper-level university students to conduct their own research and advance a sustained argument, in writing, with the goal of moving a discussion forward. This will be the aim of your research paper. Instructions will be made available during, or shortly after, our workshop on how to write a research paper. I will provide some broad topics, but each student must come up with their own project and thesis statement. **Note: there is only one paper per student.** I.e., students who select Option A, may not select Option B, vice versa.

**Group Presentation (20%)** As an alternative to individual class presentations, each student must participate in one group presentation. Detailed instructions, topic info, and a presentation schedule will be provided via OWL once every student has been placed in a group.

**Final Exam (30%):** Although the final exam will take place during the December examination period of 2022, the specific date has not yet been determined. Please look for that info, online, when the official exam schedule is posted by the College. Also, **be sure not to make any irrevocable travel arrangements, or other plans, until you know the exam date.** The exam will likely contain some sort of combination of shorter answers and longer answer(s). Anything we cover in class, at any point, is admissible and hence a proper object of study, unless I explicitly say otherwise in writing (via OWL). More details will be provided during our final session.

### **Grading Information and Explanation of Grades**

All assignments will be accompanied with clear directions. Students will be evaluated in accordance with how well they follow them. What follows is a university wide grade explanation.

A+	90-100	One could scarcely expect better from a student at this level
A	80-89	Superior work which is clearly above average
B	70-79	Good work, meeting all requirements, and eminently satisfactory
C	60-69	Competent work, meeting requirements
D	50-59	Fair work, minimally acceptable
F	below 50	Fail

**Late assignments:** Neglecting assignments which may not be submitted late (e.g., in class-assignments, e.g., presentations and Forum entries, as well as prep questions, and assignments completed after the last day of class), all late assignments will receive a late penalty of 5% per day, including weekends.

**Missed assignments:** Any accommodations for missed work, if approved, will automatically come in the form of a grade transfer to the final assignment (exam). If the College recommends an extension, where this is possible, this will not qualify as a missed assignment. Missed assignments that do not qualify for accommodations will receive a grade of zero (o).

## Course Map

### Unit 1: THE WAY THE WORLD IS

Groundwork: Writing a Book of The World



- Week 1 (Sep 14) Chapter 1: Introduction
- Week 2 (Sep 21) Chapter 2: "Individuality"
- Week 3 (Sep 28) Chapter 3: "Externality"
- Week 4 (Oct 5) Chapter 4: "Temporality" & Change
- Week 5 (Oct 12) Chapter 5: "Objectivity"

All readings listed above are from the van Inwagen text. For supplementary readings materials, please see OWL's weekly checklist.

### Unit 2: WHY THE WORLD IS

Groundwork: The Nature and Function of Cosmological Stories

#### *Minds-First Explanations*

- Week 6 (Oct 19) Chapter 6: "Necessary Being"  
Ontological Arguments for the Existence of God [Old and New]
- Week 7 (Oct 26) Chapter 7: "Necessary Being"  
Cosmological Arguments for the Existence of God [Old and New]

#### *Minds-Last Explanations* (also covered during weeks 6 & 7)

- Necessary Being: Ancient Atomism & 20th Century Physicalism

**Nov 2. Reading Week. No class.**

### Unit 3: THE INHABITANTS OF THE WORLD

- Week 8 (Nov 9) Chapter 8: "What Rational Beings Are There"?
- Week 9 (Nov 16) Chapter 9: "The Place of Rational Beings in the World" [Design vs. Chance]
- Week 10 (Nov 23) Chapter 10: The Nature of Rational Beings [Mind]
- Week 11 (Nov 30) Chapter 11: "The Nature of Rational Beings" [Personal Identity]
- Week 12 (Dec 7) Chapter 12: "The Powers of Rational Beings" [Freedom]

**Note:** The above schedule may be adjusted during the term. For the most updated and accurate information, please regularly consult your weekly checklist on OWL.

## **Appendix to Course Outlines: Academic Policies & Regulations Fall/Winter 2022**

### **Pandemic Contingency**

Huron will continue to follow the guidance of public health and government officials. It is anticipated that there will be no further disruptions to in-person instruction. This is subject to change.

### **Student Code of Conduct**

Membership in the community of Huron University College and Western University implies acceptance by every student of the principle of respect for the rights, responsibilities, dignity and well-being of others and a readiness to support an environment conducive to the intellectual and personal growth of all who study, work and live within it. Upon registration, students assume the responsibilities that such registration entails. While in the physical or online classroom, students are expected to behave in a manner that supports the learning environment of others. Please review the Student Code of Conduct at: <https://huronatwestern.ca/sites/default/files/Res%20Life/Student%20Code%20of%20Conduct%20-%20Revised%20September%202019.pdf>.

### **Prerequisite and Antirequisite Information**

Students are responsible for ensuring that they have successfully completed all course prerequisites and that they have not completed any course antirequisites. Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

### **Attendance Regulations for Examinations**

A student is entitled to be examined in courses in which registration is maintained, subject to the following limitations:

- 1) A student may be debarred from writing the final examination for failure to maintain satisfactory academic standing throughout the year.
- 2) Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class or laboratory periods in any course will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course (after due warning has been given). On the recommendation of the Department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course. The Dean of the Faculty offering the course will communicate that decision to the Dean of the Faculty of registration.

Review the policy on Attendance Regulations for Examinations here: [Academic Calendar - Western University \(uwo.ca\)](#)

### **Statement on 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 the following website: [Academic Calendar - Western University \(uwo.ca\)](http://www.uwo.ca) .The appeals process is also outlined in this policy as well as more generally at the following website: [https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/appealsundergrad.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/appealsundergrad.pdf).

### **Turnitin.com**

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>).

### **Statement on Use of Electronic Devices**

It is not appropriate to use electronic devices (such as, but not limited to, laptops, tablets, cell phones) in the classroom for non-classroom activities. Such activity is disruptive and distracting to other students and to the instructor, and can inhibit learning. Students are expected to respect the classroom environment and to refrain from inappropriate use of technology and other electronic devices in class.

### **Statement on Use of Personal Response Systems (“Clickers”)**

Personal Response Systems (“clickers”) may be used in some classes. If clickers are to be used in a class, it is the responsibility of the student to ensure that the device is activated and functional. Students must see their instructor if they have any concerns about whether the clicker is malfunctioning. Students must use only their own clicker. If clicker records are used to compute a portion of the course grade:

- the use of somebody else’s clicker in class constitutes a scholastic offence
- the possession of a clicker belonging to another student will be interpreted as an attempt to commit a scholastic offence.

### **Academic Consideration for Missed Work**

All students pursuing academic consideration, regardless of type, must contact their instructors no less than 24 hours following the end of the period of absence to clarify how they will be expected to fulfill the academic responsibilities missed during their absence. **Students are reminded that they should consider carefully the implications of postponing tests or midterm exams or delaying submission of work, and are encouraged to make appropriate decisions based on their specific circumstances.**

Students who have conditions for which academic accommodation is appropriate, such as disabilities or ongoing or chronic health conditions, should work with Accessible Education Services to determine appropriate forms of accommodation. Further details concerning policies and procedures may be found at: <http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/>.

### **Policy on Academic Consideration for a Medical/ Non-Medical Absence**

- (a) **Consideration on Medical Grounds for assignments worth *less than 10%* of final grade: **Consult Instructor Directly and Contact Academic Advising****

When seeking consideration on **medical grounds** for assignments worth *less than 10%* of the final course grade, the student should contact the instructor directly. The student need only share broad outlines of the medical situation. The instructor **may** require the student to submit documentation to the academic advisors, in which case she or he will advise the student and inform the academic advisors to expect documentation. If documentation is requested, the student will need to complete and submit the [Student Medical Certificate](#). The instructor may not collect medical documentation. The advisors will contact the instructor when the medical documentation is received, and will outline the severity and duration of the medical challenge as expressed on the Student Medical Certificate and in any other supporting documentation. The student will be informed that the instructor has been notified of the presence of medical documentation, and will be instructed to work as quickly as possible with the instructor on an agreement for accommodation.

**b) Medical Grounds for assignments worth 10% or more of final grade: Go Directly to Academic Advising**

University Senate policy, which can be found at [Academic Calendar - Western University \(uwo.ca\)](#) requires that all student requests for accommodation on medical grounds for assignments worth 10% or more of the final grade be made directly to the academic advising office of the home faculty (for Huron students, the “home faculty” is Huron), with supporting documentation in the form (minimally) of the Senate-approved Student Medical Certificate found at: [https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf).

The documentation is submitted in confidence and will not be shown to instructors. The advisors will contact the instructor when the medical documentation is received, and will outline the severity and duration of the medical challenge as expressed on the Student Medical Certificate and in any other supporting documentation. The student will be informed that the instructor has been notified of the presence of medical documentation, and will be instructed to work as quickly as possible with the instructor on an agreement for accommodation. The instructor will not normally deny accommodation where appropriate medical documentation is in place and where the duration it describes aligns with the due date(s) of assignment(s). Before denying a request for accommodation on medical grounds, the instructor will consult with the Dean. The instructor’s decision is appealable to the Dean.

**c) Consideration on Non-Medical Grounds: Consult Huron Support Services/Academic Advising, or email [huronsss@uwo.ca](mailto:huronsss@uwo.ca).**

Students seeking academic consideration for a **non-medical** absence (e.g. varsity sports, religious, compassionate, or bereavement) will be required to provide appropriate documentation. All consideration requests must include a completed [Consideration Request Form](#). Late penalties may apply at the discretion of the instructor.

Please review the full policy on Academic Consideration for medical and non-medical absence at: [accommodation\\_medical.pdf \(uwo.ca\)](#). Consult [Huron Academic Advising](#) at [huronsss@uwo.ca](mailto:huronsss@uwo.ca) for any further questions or information.

**Support Services**

For advice on course selections, degree requirements, and for assistance with requests for medical accommodation, students should email an Academic Advisor in Huron’s Student Support

Services at [huronsss@uwo.ca](mailto:huronsss@uwo.ca). An outline of the range of services offered is found on the Huron website at: <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/student-services/>.

Department Chairs, Program Directors and Coordinators are also able to answer questions about individual programs. Contact information can be found on the Huron website at: <https://huronatwestern.ca/contact/faculty-staff-directory/>.

If you think that you are too far behind to catch up or that your workload is not manageable, you should consult your Academic Advisor. If you are considering reducing your workload by dropping one or more courses, this must be done by the appropriate deadlines. Please refer to the Advising website, <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/student-services/academic-advising/> or review the list of official Sessional Dates on the Academic Calendar, available here: <http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/SessionalDates.cfm>.

You should consult with the course instructor and the Academic Advisor who can help you consider alternatives to dropping one or more courses. Note that dropping a course may affect OSAP and/or Scholarship/Bursary eligibility.

Huron Student Support Services: <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/student-services/>

Office of the Registrar: <https://registrar.uwo.ca/>

Student Quick Reference Guide: <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/student-services/#1>

Academic Support & Engagement: <http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/>

Huron University College Student Council: <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/beyond-classroom/hucsc/>

Western USC: <http://westernusc.ca/your-services/#studentservices>

### **Wellness and Health Supports at Huron and Western**

University students may encounter setbacks from time to time that can impact academic performance. Huron offers a variety of services that are here to support your success and wellbeing. All Huron staff and faculty have received training on responding to disclosures of Gender-Based Sexual Violence (GBSV); students should know that the Community Safety Office is a resource for survivors, providing support and, if desired, guidance while referring them to the further supports that they may require. Please visit <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life-campus/student-services/wellness-safety> for more information or contact staff directly:

Wellness Services: [huronwellness@huron.uwo.ca](mailto:huronwellness@huron.uwo.ca)

Community Safety Office: [safety@huron.uwo.ca](mailto:safety@huron.uwo.ca)

Additional supports for Health and Wellness may be found and accessed at Western through, <https://www.uwo.ca/health/>.

Western Calendar - Policy Pages -

[Academic Calendar - Western University \(uwo.ca\)](#)