

**SYLLABUS  
METAPHYSICS  
(0122-315-01)**

R. Dennehy  
Office Hours T 11-noon; R 1-2pm & by appt.  
CA D6; x6456  
e-mail: dennehyr @usfca.edu

**Course Aim**

The aim of this course is twofold: to introduce the student to the subject matter and method of the branch of philosophy known as “metaphysics” and to the importance of metaphysical principles, concepts, and theories in our understanding of the human person and the world. The views of various major philosophers on the nature and significance of metaphysics as well as on several central objects of metaphysical inquiry will comprise the matter for the course.

The method of teaching the course will be that of lecture/seminar with the emphasis placed on the latter. This means that regular class attendance and familiarity with the assigned readings are vital.

**Required Reading**

Assigned Texts on the Internet, Class Handouts

**Assignments & Grading**

3 seminar presentations = 45% of course grade (15% each)

1 paper, 10-15 pp. typed = 40% of course grade

class participation = 15 % of course grade

The student must consult with me about his or her proposed topic for the paper no later than Monday, Nov. 2<sup>nd</sup>.

An unexcused failure to submit the papers on the assigned dates or to give an oral presentation on the assigned date will result in an “F” for the assignment. All petitions for late submission of papers or for a rescheduling of the oral presentation must be documented. Only serious or humanitarian reasons will count.

The research paper will substitute for the final examination and is due on the date assigned for the examination (although there is no examination), Thurs.,12/15, by 5pm and is to be submitted to me or the program assistant.

**Attendance**

Because seminars run mainly on student participation, regular student attendance is crucial. Two unexcused absences for the course will lower the final grade to a “C”; three unexcused absences will lower it to a “D”; four or more such absences will produce an “F” for the course. *Excused* absences are those caused by illness and verified by a letter

from the medical provider or caused by official university business verified by a letter, on USF letterhead, by the person in charge of the relevant program.

## **Assigned Readings**

### **What is Metaphysics?**

Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Bk I, chs 1&2

A.J. Ayer, Language, "The Elimination of Metaphysics," in *Language, Truth and Logic*,

R. G. Collingwood, "No Science of Pure Being," "Metaphysics Without Ontology," "Metaphysics An Historical Science" in *An Essay on Metaphysics*, Chs 2, 3, & 6

Thomas Aquinas, "On the Nature and Excellence of Metaphysics," in *Preface to Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*

Dorothea Frede, "The Question of Being: Heidegger's Project"

### **Metaphysical Method**

"On the Division of Speculative Science," Aquinas

"Dialectic," Hegel

"Existence and Being," Heidegger

### **Metaphysical Issues**

#### *Being*

"Being and the One," Parmenides

"The Antinomy of Being and the One," Plato

"Being and Substance," Aristotle

"The Principle of Substance," Descartes

#### *Essence & Existence*

"The Composition of Essence & Existence," Aquinas

#### *Knowledge*

"Gradations of Human Knowledge," Plato

“Intuition,” Bergson  
“On the Emptiness of Pure Concepts,” Kant

*Freedom*

“Freedom of Choice,” Aquinas  
“Free Will,” Kant  
“Levels of Being, Degrees of Autonomy,” Aquinas

*God*

“The Ontological Argument,” Descartes  
“Rejection of the Ontological Argument,” Aquinas  
“Five Proofs of God’s Existence,” Aquinas  
“Why God’s Existence Cannot Be Proved,” Kant