
PHIL 2400 – Philosophy, Science and Nature
University of Georgia
Spring Semester 2008

Instructor: Dr. Bryan Baird
Office: 23 Peabody Hall
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Required Text: *Philosophy of Science: A Contemporary Introduction* (2nd ed.), Alex Rosenberg

Course Description and Objective: This course is designed as an introduction to the philosophy of science by looking closely at some of the problems of science, both classic and contemporary, and how they relate to problems in philosophy. We will deal with differing positions on what counts as science (vs. religion, myth, or superstition), scientific explanation, scientific theorizing, and the notion of scientific progress, among other things. Although no previous knowledge of philosophy is required, we will be dealing as much with philosophy as we will with science, and this will provide you with a very different, and oftentimes very demanding, approach to science.

The objective of this course is for you to have a more philosophically mature and informed view of science. This will be achieved primarily through the readings and lectures, but will certainly be enhanced to the degree that you engage yourself in the material and classroom discussions.

The lectures and discussion will proceed under the assumption that you've read the selection for that class period. Reading philosophy, however, is not like reading other material. It will aid your comprehension greatly if you (1) actively read the selections (paying careful attention both to *what* the position is and to the reasons *why* it is espoused) **at least twice** before lecture, (2) take notes on the selections as you read them, and (3) ask and answer questions in class.

Course Requirements: Attendance, three exams and a final exam.

Attendance (25%). I expect you to be in class and on time. If you are late to class ("late" = after I have finished taking roll), remind me to count you late or you will be charged with an unexcused absence. Being late to class twice constitutes one unexcused absence. (For the absence to be "excused," you will need to present reasonable proof. What counts as "reasonable" and "proof" is dependent on my judgment. So, if you have a question as to what counts as reasonable proof in a particular situation, you should ask me.)

You will begin the course with an attendance grade of A. Beginning after the drop/add period, I will lower your attendance grade for each unexcused absence. So,

one unexcused absence will get you an A-, two an B+, three a B, and so on. You will be responsible to get caught up for any missed material.

Exams (75%). There will be three in-class exams and one final exam for this course. Each exam, including the final exam, will cover material since the previous exam. The exams will be a combination of short answer and short essay.

Grading: Your final grade will be determined by averaging together the grades according to the proportions above. Consideration will be taken for improvement in the course: in borderline grade cases, higher grades earned later in the course, signs of real progress, and active participation may bump you up to the next higher letter grade.

For final letter grades submitted to the university, **I will be using the plus-minus system.** I will use the scale below to determine final letter grades. I will not normally round up for the final letter grades. For example, if you earn a number grade of 88.5 in the course, you will get a final letter grade of B+, a 95 will earn you an A, a 76.5 will earn you a C, etc.

Plus-Minus Letter Grade Scale

A	94+	C+	77 - 79
A-	90 - 93	C	74 - 76
B+	87 - 89	C-	70 - 72
B	83 - 86	D	60 - 69
B-	80 - 82	F	< 59

Ethical Considerations: This course involves an ethical dimension in two ways. First, you must abide by the [Academic Honesty Policy](#) of the university. Second, this course is set within an academic environment and you are expected to behave accordingly in the classroom. At least part of what this means for you is that there will be no cell phone ringing, no private conversations, no crossword puzzles, and no napping. These activities are distracting both to me and to those around you, and they are just plain rude. Failing to respect the academic environment may result in your being asked to leave the class.

* The information included in this syllabus is meant as a general guideline and is subject to change at any time during the semester.