

PHIL 328: METAPHYSICS
Samford University, Spring 2020

Basic Information:

Instructor: Dr. Taylor Cyr

Class Meeting Times: MWF 8:00am-9:05am

Class Meeting Location: Chapman Hall 214

Instructor's Email: tcyr@samford.edu

Instructor's Office Hours: MW 1:30pm-3:00pm

Instructor's Office: Chapman Hall 315

Required Text:

- Ryan Wasserman, *Paradoxes of Time Travel*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018.

Course Overview

Catalog Description:

Introduction to and examination of the philosophical study of the nature of reality, time, personal identity, consciousness, freedom, and other related issues.

Our Focus:

This course will focus on three classic topics in metaphysics: God, time, and free will. Before diving into the question of the existence and nature of God, we will clarify what counts as a *metaphysical* topic, and we will briefly consider a classic metaphysical question: why is there something rather than nothing? We will then turn to God, time, and free will, often using questions about the metaphysical possibility of time travel as a portal to other issues in metaphysics, including causation and personal identity. Some paradoxes of time travel (including the classic "Grandfather Paradox") concern the abilities, or the freedom, of time-travelers, so our discussion of time will segue into an examination of the nature of free will and various potential threats to free will.

Course Requirements (% of Final Grade)

- Midterm Exam (15%)
- Final Exam (20%)
- Paper (25%)
- Participation (20%)
- QCOs (20%)

Midterm Exam and Final Exam:

- The midterm exam and final exam will be similar in length and in format. The final exam is not cumulative (it will only test material from the second half of the course).
- The format of both exams will be a combination of true/false, multiple-choice, and essay questions designed to test understanding of the material covered in the assigned readings and class discussions.

Paper:

- A paper of 2,500-3,000 words (roughly 8-10 pages, double-spaced) is due during week 14. More specific instructions for the paper (including potential topics) will be given during week 10.
- You must submit a rough outline of the paper during week 12. More on this during week 10 as well.
- Late papers will be marked down 1/3 of a grade (e.g., from a B- to C+) for each day past their due date.

Participation and QCOs:

- You must attend class, be on time, bring your copy of the assigned reading(s), listen attentively, and answer and ask questions. Your final participation grade will include an evaluation of your overall contribution to class discussion.
- Throughout the term, you must prepare questions/comments/objections (QCOs) on the readings. These QCOs should each be several sentences to a paragraph in length – just enough to put a little flesh on an interesting idea, puzzle, or source of doubt. QCOs are due at the beginning of class, submitted electronically via Canvas, and I may ask you to share your QCO with the class.
- There are 36 class meetings with readings eligible for QCOs, and you will be permitted 3 mulligans (i.e., you only need to complete 33 QCOs). You may submit only one QCO per class (so no doubling up). QCOs will be graded credit/no-credit only. Late QCOs are permissible only in the case of unforeseen emergency.

Grading Scale: 93-100= A; 90-92= A-; 87-89= B+; 83-86= B; 80-82= B-; 77-79= C+; 73-76= C; 70-72= C-; 67-69= D+; 63-66= D; 60-62= D-; 0-59= F

Course Policies

Academic Integrity:

Students are expected to act with academic integrity. As stated in the Samford University catalog, “students, upon enrollment, enter into voluntary association with Samford University. They must be willing to observe high standards of intellectual integrity; they must respect knowledge and practice academic honesty.” Unless specified otherwise, students are expected to do their own independent work, and to refrain from cheating, copying or plagiarizing the work of others. When drawing from various resources for assignments, students must provide proper citations. For details, visit <https://www.samford.edu/departments/registrar/policies-and-definitions>. Plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct will be reported to the Academic Integrity Office (AIO) and will result in an F on the assignment.

Attendance Policy:

All unexcused absences will negatively affect your participation average. Make-up work may be negotiated for absences due to medical or emergency reasons. Students who miss 6 classes will receive an “FA” for the course.

Electronic Devices:

As stated in the Student Handbook, “Student use of cell phones, messaging devices and other electronic devices (for example, recording devices, music players, PDAs, computers) is prohibited in classes unless specifically permitted by the instructor.” In other words, you may not use your phone or computer (or any other electronic device) in class without meeting with me in advance to get permission. I will allow you to use a computer if you have an accommodation or if you otherwise make a case for why you want to use an electronic device in class, but in either case you will need to meet with me in person to discuss.

Respect:

Students are expected to treat each other and the instructor with respect. This includes, among other things, paying attention to what a person is saying, being charitable to others’ points of views, and criticizing ideas rather than persons.

Canvas and Email:

Course announcements will be delivered via Canvas or email, so students are expected to check Canvas and their email at least once per day on weekdays. (You can edit your notification settings in Canvas so that you are alerted to new Canvas announcements via email.) The instructor will respond to emails within 24 hours (and often much more quickly than that).

Disabilities:

Students with disabilities who wish to request accommodations should register with Disability Resources (205) 726-4078, disability@samford.edu, University Center Room 205, www.samford.edu/dr). Students who are registered with Disability Resources are responsible for providing me with a copy of their accommodation letter and scheduling a meeting with me to discuss how their approved accommodations will apply to this course. Accommodations will not be implemented until we have met to review your accommodation letter.

Other Helpful Information

Campus Emergency

RAVE is the primary method of communication used by Samford University during a campus emergency. If you have not registered for *RAVE* alerts, please go to the My Contact Information box on your Portal homepage to update your *RAVE* Emergency Alert Information. Samford University utilizes *Samford Alert* for desktop, laptop, tablet, and mobile devices to provide students with information, procedures, and links about what to do in the event of a variety of emergency situations that could occur on our campus. If you do not already have the *Samford Alert* app on your mobile device, laptop, desktop, or tablet, please go to the *In Case of Emergency* box on your Portal homepage for instructions on downloading the App. Once you have downloaded the App, please take time to review the information provided, it is important that you know what to do in the case of a campus emergency.

Title IX

Samford University is committed to the creation and maintenance of a safe learning environment for students and the University community. In accordance with federal policy all University employees are required to report information related to discrimination and harassment which includes, but is not limited to, sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking, and sexual harassment. For this reason, if you tell a faculty member about a situation of sexual harassment or sexual violence or other related misconduct, the faculty member must share that information with the University Title IX Coordinator. If you wish to speak with an employee who is not required to report information, you can find a list of confidential resources listed in the online student handbook and the Title IX website or contact the Counseling Center at 205-726-4083 or the Office of Spiritual Life at 205-726-2825.

Communication Resource Center

The Communication Resource Center (CRC) offers *free* tutoring for Samford students in oral and written communication as well as support for developing and improving critical reading skills. The CRC is in Brooks 222 and is open MTWR 10:00am-6:00pm. Students are encouraged to schedule appointments at samford.mywconline.com. Students in online programs may opt for online appointments through the same appointment link and can upload files for the tutor to review. For more information, visit <http://www.samford.edu/departments/communication-resource-center/> Note: The first time you schedule an appointment, you will need to create an account, using your Samford email and password.

Course Schedule and Readings¹

Part 1: Introduction

- Week 1
 - 1/20: *Martin Luther King Jr. Day (No Class)*
 - 1/22: Introduction to the Course
 - *No Assigned Reading*
 - 1/24: Why Is There Something Rather than Nothing?
 - Peter van Inwagen, “Why Is There Anything at All?”

Part 2: God

- Week 2
 - 1/27: God’s Existence: Arguments for
 - Alvin Plantinga, “The Ontological Argument” (from *God, Freedom, and Evil*)
 - 1/29: God’s Existence: Arguments for (continued)
 - Joshua Rasmussen, “Cosmological Arguments from Contingency”
 - 1/31: God’s Existence: The Problem of Evil
 - J. L. Mackie, “Evil and Omnipotence”
- Week 3
 - 2/3: God’s Existence: The Problem of Evil (continued)
 - Daniel Speak, “Free Will and the Problem of Evil”
 - 2/5: God’s Existence: The Problem of Evil (continued)
 - William Rowe, “The Inductive Argument from Evil against the Existence of God”
 - 2/7: God’s Nature: Omnipotence
 - St. Thomas Aquinas, “Is God’s Power Limited?” (from the *Summa*)
 - George Mavrodes, “Some Puzzles Concerning Omnipotence”
 - Harry Frankfurt, “The Logic of Omnipotence”
- Week 4
 - 2/10: God’s Nature: Simplicity
 - Eleonore Stump, “God’s Simplicity”
 - 2/12: God’s Nature: Eternity
 - Stephen Davis, “Temporal Eternity”
 - 2/14: God’s Nature: Eternity (continued)
 - Hugh McCann, “The God Beyond Time”

Part 3: Time

- Week 5
 - 2/17: The Nature of Time
 - Dean Zimmerman, “The Privileged Present: Defending an ‘A-Theory’ of Time”
 - 2/19: The Nature of Time (continued)
 - Theodore Sider, “Time”
 - David Lewis, “The Paradoxes of Time Travel” (pp. 145-149)
 - 2/21: Time Travel: Introduction
 - Ryan Wasserman, POTT 1-22

¹ About one third of the readings are included in Ryan Wasserman’s *Paradoxes of Time Travel* (the assigned textbook), abbreviated here as POTT. All other materials will be provided electronically through Canvas. This schedule is subject to change (at the instructor’s discretion) with advanced notice.

- Week 6
 - 2/24: The Nature of Time and Time Travel
 - Ryan Wasserman, POTT 23-38
 - 2/26: The Nature of Time and Time Travel (continued)
 - Ryan Wasserman, POTT 38-55
 - 2/28: The Nature of Time and Time Travel (continued)
 - Ryan Wasserman, POTT 55-69
- Week 7
 - 3/2: Time Travel and Causation
 - Ryan Wasserman, POTT 145-165
 - 3/4: Time Travel and Causation
 - Ryan Wasserman, POTT 165-182
 - 3/6: *Midterm*
- Week 8
 - 3/9: *Spring Break (No Class)*
 - 3/11: *Spring Break (No Class)*
 - 3/13: *Spring Break (No Class)*
- Week 9
 - 3/16: Time Travel and Identity
 - Ryan Wasserman, POTT 183-209
 - 3/18: Mereology
 - James Van Cleve, “The Moon and Sixpence: A Defense of Mereological Universalism”
 - 3/20: Mereology and Time Travel
 - Ryan Wasserman, POTT 209-224
- Week 10
 - 3/23: Personal Identity
 - Eric Olson, “Personal Identity”
 - 3/25: Personal Identity and the Afterlife
 - Lynn Rudder Baker, “Death and the Afterlife”
 - 3/27: Time Travel and Abilities
 - Ryan Wasserman, POTT 70-90
 - *Discuss Paper*
- Week 11
 - 3/30: Time Travel and Abilities (continued)
 - Ryan Wasserman, POTT 90-106
 - 4/1: Time Travel and Abilities (continued)
 - David Lewis, “The Paradoxes of Time Travel” (pp. 149-152)
 - Ryan Wasserman, POTT 107-130
 - 4/3: Time Travel and Abilities (continued)
 - Ryan Wasserman, POTT 130-144

Part 4: Free Will

- Week 12
 - 4/6: Time Travel and Free Will
 - Neal Tognazzini, “Time Travel and Free Will”
 - 4/8: Free Will and Determinism
 - Peter van Inwagen, “An Argument for Incompatibilism”

- 4/10: Free Will and Determinism (continued)
 - Christopher Evan Franklin, “The Luck and *Mind* Arguments”
 - *Paper Outline Due*
- Week 13
 - 4/13: *Easter Monday (No Class)*
 - 4/15: Free Will and Determinism (continued)
 - Harry Frankfurt, “Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility”
 - 4/17: Free Will and Divine Foreknowledge
 - Nelson Pike, “Divine Omniscience and Voluntary Action”
- Week 14
 - 4/20: Free Will and Divine Foreknowledge (continued)
 - Linda Zagzebski, “Foreknowledge and Free Will”
 - 4/22: Free Will and Divine Foreknowledge (continued)
 - Ryan Wasserman, “Freedom, Foreknowledge, and Dependence”
 - 4/24: Free Will and Divine Foreknowledge (continued)
 - Taylor Cyr, “Timelessness and Freedom”
 - *Paper Due*

Part 5: Conclusion

- Week 15
 - 4/27: What Is Metaphysics?
 - Earl Conee, “What Is Metaphysics?”
 - 4/29: Course Summary and Review
 - *No New Readings*
 - 5/1: *Study Day (No Class)*
- *Final Exam*
 - Monday, 5/4, 8:00am-10:00am