

**PHIL 328: METAPHYSICS**  
Samford University, Spring 2023

**Basic Information:**

Instructor: Dr. Taylor Cyr  
Instructor's Email: tcyr@samford.edu  
Instructor's Office: Chapman Hall 315

Class Meeting Times: TTh 3:00pm-4:50pm  
Class Meeting Location: Chapman 320  
Office Hours: TTh 9:00am-10:00am

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 15. More specific instructions for the paper (including potential topics) will be given during week 12.
- You must submit a rough outline of the paper during week 13. More on this during week 12 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 26 class meetings with readings eligible for QCOs, and you will be permitted 6 mulligans (i.e., you only need to complete 20 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**

#### **I. Statement regarding online or remote delivery if the course must transition to a digital learning format**

The 22-23 academic year will see the return of many regular activities and operations; however, as the presence of Covid-19 is monitored on campus and within our community, state law, local health orders, and CDC guidance could affect the course activities and modality (including a change to an emergency remote or online course). Students must attend class and check email and Canvas regularly for any important updates from the course instructor and/or university administration.

#### **II. Mask requirements within the educational setting:**

The instructor reserves the right to require masking within the classroom.

#### **III. Student illness or vulnerable to COVID-19**

Vaccination and receipt of vaccine booster doses are the best way for a student to reduce the risk of academic disruption due to COVID-related illness. Samford University strongly encourages all members of our community, including students, to receive the COVID-19 vaccine and booster doses at recommended intervals. However, there may be individual circumstances where students may not be able to receive the vaccination or choose not to receive the vaccination. Students who are not able to attend a required class meeting because of quarantine, illness, or contact with a COVID-19 positive individual should notify the instructor of record within 24 hours of the class meeting. Additionally, students should respond to contact by the Academic Success Center for assistance in coordinating academic support due to Covid-19 related absences. An excused absence does not relieve a student of responsibility for the academic work in the class missed.

Students who have a disability which makes them more vulnerable to COVID-19 (e.g., immune-compromised,) must register with Disability Resources and follow standard procedure.

#### **IV. Technology needs**

Because of the possibility of a student needing to participate in the course virtually at some point during the semester, all students should have the following technology available to them:

- A Windows 10 or Macintosh desktop or laptop computer; although Chromebooks and mobile devices are capable of accessing the Canvas learning management system, they may not be compatible with certain third-party software.
- A web cam (built into most modern laptops)
- A microphone and speakers, headphones, or earbuds (also built in to most modern laptops)
- The most recent version of the Chrome or Firefox Web browser; the Safari browser can be particularly problematic when accessing online courses.
- A stable Internet connection capable of at least 2 Mbps upstream and 5 Mbps downstream. Students may test the speed of their connection at <http://speedtest.net>

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.

## **V. Emergency Readiness**

RAVE is the primary method of communication used by Samford University during a campus emergency. If you have not registered for RAVE alerts, please use the link provided below and go to the My Contact Information box on your Portal homepage to update your RAVE Emergency Alert Information. <https://connect.samford.edu/group/mycampus/student>

Samford University utilizes Alert Samford 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 Alert Samford app on your mobile device, laptop, desktop, or tablet, please click on this link <https://connect.samford.edu/group/mycampus/student> and go to the Emergency Information 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.

## **VI. Americans with Disabilities Act**

Students with disabilities who wish to request accommodations should register with Accessibility and Accommodations (205) 726-4892, [access@samford.edu](mailto:access@samford.edu), DBH 105, <https://www.samford.edu/departments/disability-resources/>. Students who are registered with Accessibility and Accommodations 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.

## **VII. Title IX**

Samford University and its faculty are committed to creating and maintaining a safe learning environment for all students and the entire University community. If you or someone you know has experienced sexual harassment, sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking, or discrimination based on sex or gender, please know that help and support are available. Samford University strongly encourages all community members to report incidents of sexual misconduct to the Title IX Office. You may contact the Title IX Office at 205-726-2764 or [titleix@samford.edu](mailto:titleix@samford.edu).

Please be aware that all faculty members are required to disclose information concerning suspected or alleged sexual harassment or other violations of the Samford University Sexual Misconduct Policy to the Title IX Office. You can also make a disclosure yourself, including an anonymous report, through the Sexual Misconduct Report Form accessible on the Title IX website at <https://www.samford.edu/students/title-ix/>. If the Title IX Office receives information about an incident, they will reach out to offer information about resources, rights, and available procedural options. It is a student's choice whether they wish to engage or respond to that outreach.

If you, or another student you know, wishes to speak with a confidential resource who is not obligated to report information to the Title IX Coordinator, please reference the list of confidential resources in the online student handbook. You can also connect with a confidential resource through the Counseling Office at 205-726-4083 or the Office of Spiritual Life at 205-726-2825.

### **VIII. Student Bereavement Policy**

In the event a student experiences the death of a significant member of his or her family or community, the University may excuse absences up to five days for travel and bereavement. The Provost's office will notify advisors and instructors of excused absences. It will be the responsibility of the student to follow up with faculty regarding missed exams, quizzes and required work for the class.

### **IX. 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. CRC appointments are available Monday-Thursday. Students can schedule appointments at [samford.mywconline.com](http://samford.mywconline.com). Students will upload files for the tutor to review and meet in real-time sessions with a tutor. 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.

### **X. Inclement Weather**

Inclement weather or other events beyond the control of the University that might cause risk or danger to students, faculty and staff may occasionally result in changes to normal University operations, including cancellation of classes or events; the class schedule and/or calendar may be adjusted.

### **XI. Counseling Services**

Students may benefit from meeting with a counselor at some point to discuss difficult issues, gain insight for dealing with stress, or to process and understand events from the past. When a need for counseling arises, students should contact Counseling Services & Wellness Programs. On-site appointments are prepaid through student fees and there is no extra cost to the student. To schedule an appointment, please email [counseling@samford.edu](mailto:counseling@samford.edu), call 205-726-2065, or stop by Dwight Beeson Hall (DBH) room 203.

### **XII. Library Services**

Samford University Library ([library.samford.edu](http://library.samford.edu)) is more than just a building; it is a vast array of resources curated to support your success. In addition to print, media, and online resources, the library has collaborative meeting and study spaces, technology that supports your academic

endeavors, and professional librarians with the expertise to assist with research needs. Please Ask Us (samford.libanswers.com), email us (reference@samford.edu), or call us at 205-726-2196 for more information about how we can help. We are here to assist with your information and research needs.

### **XIII. Student Government Association Samford University Honor Pledge**

#### *Preamble*

Samford University's motto—For God, For Learning, Forever—brings together our commitment to our Christian heritage, the pursuit and transmission of knowledge, and the enduring virtues.

Only a particular kind of person and institution can fulfill such a demanding motto. To do this, the individuals who form the Samford community must embrace honor in all areas of life and scholarship. Thus, an honor pledge is an appropriate way for the Samford community to live out its motto.

#### *Honor Pledge*

I believe that the members of the Samford community possess dignity and are worthy of honor.

I understand that honoring others fosters academic achievement, personal growth, and spiritual development.

I commit to hold myself and my peers to the standards of conduct and academic integrity maintained by the University.

To this I, \_\_\_\_\_, pledge my sacred honor.

For God, For Learning, Forever

### **Course Schedule and Readings<sup>1</sup>**

#### **Part 1: Introduction**

- Week 1
  - 1/10: Introduction to the Course
    - *No Assigned Reading*
  - 1/12: Why Is There Something Rather than Nothing?
    - Peter van Inwagen, “Why Is There Anything at All?”

#### **Part 2: God**

- Week 2
  - 1/17: God's Existence: Arguments for
    - Alvin Plantinga, “The Ontological Argument” (from *God, Freedom, and Evil*)
  - 1/19: God's Existence: Arguments for (continued)
    - Joshua Rasmussen, “Cosmological Arguments from Contingency”

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<sup>1</sup> 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 3
  - 1/24: God's Existence: The Problem of Evil
    - J. L. Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence"
    - Daniel Speak, "Free Will and the Problem of Evil"
  - 1/26: God's Existence: The Problem of Evil (continued)
    - William Rowe, "The Inductive Argument from Evil against the Existence of God"
- Week 4
  - 1/31: God's Nature: Simplicity
    - Eleonore Stump, "God's Simplicity"
  - 2/2: God's Nature: Eternity
    - Stephen Davis, "Temporal Eternity"
    - Hugh McCann, "The God Beyond Time"

### Part 3: Time

- Week 5
  - 2/7: The Nature of Time
    - Theodore Sider, "Time"
    - Dean Zimmerman, "The Privileged Present: Defending an 'A-Theory' of Time"
  - 2/9: Time Travel: Introduction
    - Ryan Wasserman, POTT 1-22
    - David Lewis, "The Paradoxes of Time Travel" (pp. 145-149)
- Week 6
  - 2/14: The Nature of Time and Time Travel
    - Ryan Wasserman, POTT 23-55
  - 2/16: Special Relativity and Time Travel
    - Ryan Wasserman, POTT 55-69
- Week 7
  - 2/21: Time Travel and Causation
    - Ryan Wasserman, POTT 145-165
  - 2/23: Time Travel and Causation (continued); Review for Midterm
    - Ryan Wasserman, POTT 165-182
- Week 8
  - 2/28: *Midterm*
  - 3/2: Time Travel and Identity
    - Ryan Wasserman, POTT 183-209
- Week 9
  - 3/7: *Spring Break (No Class)*
  - 3/9: *Spring Break (No Class)*
- Week 10
  - 3/14: Mereology
    - James Van Cleve, "The Moon and Sixpence: A Defense of Mereological Universalism"
    - Ryan Wasserman, POTT 209-224
  - 3/16: Personal Identity and the Afterlife
    - Eric Olson, "Personal Identity"
    - Lynn Rudder Baker, "Death and the Afterlife"
- Week 11
  - 3/21: Time Travel and Abilities
    - Ryan Wasserman, POTT 70-90

- 3/23: Time Travel and Abilities (continued)
  - Ryan Wasserman, POTT 90-106
- Week 12
  - 3/28: Time Travel and Abilities (continued)
    - David Lewis, “The Paradoxes of Time Travel” (pp. 149-152)
    - Ryan Wasserman, POTT 107-130
    - *Discuss Paper*
  - 3/30: Time Travel and Abilities (continued)
    - Ryan Wasserman, POTT 130-144

#### **Part 4: Free Will**

- Week 13
  - 4/4: Time Travel and Free Will
    - Neal Tognazzini, “Time Travel and Free Will”
    - *Paper Outline Due*
  - 4/6: Free Will and Determinism
    - Peter van Inwagen, “An Argument for Incompatibilism”
    - Christopher Evan Franklin, “The Luck and *Mind* Arguments”
- Week 14
  - 4/11: Free Will and Divine Foreknowledge
    - Nelson Pike, “Divine Omniscience and Voluntary Action”
    - Linda Zagzebski, “Foreknowledge and Free Will”
  - 4/13: Free Will and Divine Foreknowledge (continued)
    - Ryan Wasserman, “Freedom, Foreknowledge, and Dependence”
- Week 15
  - 4/18: Free Will and Divine Foreknowledge (continued)
    - Taylor Cyr, “Dependence and the Freedom to Do Otherwise”
    - *Paper Due*

#### **Part 5: Conclusion**

- 4/20: What Is Metaphysics?
  - Earl Conee, “What Is Metaphysics?”
- *Final Exam*
  - 4/25 (Tuesday), 10:30am-12:30pm: *Final Exam*
    - *No late work will be accepted after the end of the final exam period.*