

# Introduction to Metaphysics

**Instructor:** Eugene Vaynberg

**Time:** MW 10:15am-11:44am

**Location:** TBD

**Office Hours:** TBD

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## 1. Description

Broadly speaking, metaphysics seeks to answer fundamental questions about the nature, existence, and interrelations of different kinds of entities in the world. This course will focus primarily on metaphysics of science, which examines questions that arise at the intersection of science, metaphysics, and the philosophy of science. Some of the topics we will engage include: causation, dispositions, laws of nature, natural kinds, and scientific realism. We will also spend some time investigating the nature of the mind and the self. As part of exploring these questions, the course will help develop your philosophical reading, writing, and reasoning skills.

## 2. Objectives

Through active participation in this course, you will:

- Discover and explore some big philosophical questions about the nature of the world.
- Further your thinking about central philosophical questions at the intersection of metaphysics and science.
- Understand philosophical methods and improve logical reasoning.
- Improve writing skills via philosophically informed writing assignments.

## 3. Structure

In addition to in-person sessions, students are expected to do assigned readings before class, do online text annotations, complete an argument reconstruction, complete multiple writing assignments, and actively participate in class discussions.

### Technology Policy

Laptops are strongly discouraged but allowed. Reasons for this:

- <https://www.chronicle.com/blogs/languafranca/2014/08/25/why-im-asking-you-not-to-use-laptops>
- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/28182528>

## **Assignments & Assessments**

- Perusall (Discussion Board) participation – 20%
- In-class participation – 10%
- Argument Reconstruction – 10%
- Paper Outline (1-2 pages) – 10%
- Paper Draft (4-6 pages) – 20%
- Final Paper (5-7 pages) – 30% [Note: this paper is an edited version of the draft – it is not a new paper]

### Note on the paper assignments:

Each step of the writing process is intended to help you develop an increasingly better philosophical paper by the end of the semester. This means you will choose one topic that will serve as the focus of the outline, draft, and final paper. I will provide detailed feedback at each step in the process that you will incorporate to improve your written work.

## **4. Reading Schedule – TBD**