Instructor: Douglas Kutach
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Department of Philosophy
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Course Hours: 11:00 AM - 10:50 AM Monday, Wednesday, Friday.

Office Hours: Monday 2:10 PM to 4:10 PM.

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Course Description

The title of the course comes from a collection of papers written by Wilfrid Sellars on metaphysics, epistemology, and language. The first paper in the book is “Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man” where he lays out a subtle distinction between the “manifest image” and “scientific image” and discusses their relationship.

The subject matter of the course will explore a wide variety of ways in which our scientific theories do not nicely fit with our conception of ourselves as existing in the world.

The main topics for the course include...

- Materialism: We will have a short introduction into philosophy by examining to what extent various things (e.g. people, minds, thoughts) can be reduced to fundamental physics.
- We will explore how mental phenomena fits with physical phenomena. Topics to be discussed include mental causation, perceptual properties, consciousness, and artificial intelligence.
- Free Will, Personal Identity: So much science has seemed to explain larger things in terms of smaller things, and the smallest things seem to obey relatively simple mathematical equations. This suggests that if something like our current theories of physics is true, then our minds are constrained and maybe even determined by the physical laws that apparently govern everything. In turn, this casts doubt on our conception of ourselves as having a special kind of identity over time and over related questions like whether we have a will.
- Physics Topics: Time Travel, The Direction of Time, Quantum Mechanics and Consciousness, Multiverse Theories of the Universe, Eternal Recurrence.
Tasks and Evaluations

Here are your tasks for the course:

1. Your main assignment for the term will be to create a 10 to 15-minute audio podcast, explaining (to a lay audience) a philosophical problem, and either some scientific theory or experimental results, and a discussion of how the science informs our attempt to solve the philosophical problem. Your initial podcast submission will be turned midway through the course and will be worth 15% of your final grade. Your podcast will be graded on how clearly you communicate the philosophical and scientific content, whether you covered the topic of your written podcast plan, the quality of your commentary, how interesting you make the material, and how professional the final product is. This submission will be graded by other students, but you will get feedback from me and have a chance to make changes before your work is graded.

2. You will turn in a podcast plan detailing what subject you will cover and an ordered outline of the material you will include in your podcast. This will be graded based on the level of detail that you provide and how well-conceived your pedagogical strategy is. The value of this assignment is 5% of your grade.

3. You will evaluate and grade 4 other students podcasts. You will be graded on the usefulness and detail of your commentary. This will comprise 5% of your final grade. You may forgo part or even all of this work if the need arises for some additional technical troubleshooting.

4. You will resubmit your podcast assignment, after having received feedback from your comrades, and made improvements. This will count for 10% of your final grade.

5. There are three papers each worth 15% of your final grade. These will most likely be short papers (4-6 pages double spaced) for which you will be allowed about 5 days warning.

6. There will be a final exam worth 20% of your final grade. It will involve writing about 5-6 short essay answers to questions. I will provide numerous sample questions beforehand.