

# Philosophy 700: Proseminar

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University of Massachusetts Amherst  
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**Chris's Office Hours:** Thursdays 11:00am-12:00pm, South College E417.

**Ned's Office Hours:** Tuesday and Thursday 1:00pm-2:00pm. South College E421.

## Course Overview

The Philosophy Department Proseminar has two main aims: (i) to give first-year students in our Ph.D. program a solid grounding in some of the foundational works and main topics that shape contemporary philosophy, and (ii) to allow our first-year students to develop their skills in writing papers and giving presentations.

## Course Requirements

- ❖ **Five 15-minute presentations** (collectively worth 25% of final grade)
- ❖ **Seven weekly papers** (collectively worth 35% of final grade)
- ❖ **One term paper** (worth 40% of final grade)

## Required Readings

- Carnap, Rudolf (1959). The Elimination of Metaphysics Through Logical Analysis of Language. In Alfred Jules Ayer, *Logical positivism*. Glencoe, IL: The Free Press. pp. 60-81.
- Bennett, Karen (2009). Composition, colocation, and metaontology. In Ryan Wasserman, David Manley & David Chalmers, *Metametaphysics: New Essays on the Foundations of Ontology*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press. pp. 38.
- Carnap, Rudolf (1950). Empiricism, Semantics and Ontology. *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 4 (11):20-40.

- Bennett, Karen (2016). There is no special problem with metaphysics. *Philosophical Studies* 173 (1):21-37.
- White, Morton G. (1950). The Analytic and the Synthetic: An Untenable Dualism. In Sidney Hook, *John Dewey: philosopher of science and freedom*. New York,: The Dial Press. pp. 316-330.
- Grice, H. P. & Strawson, P. F. (1956). In defense of a dogma. *Philosophical Review* 65 (2):141-158.
- Lewis, David K. (1986). *On the Plurality of Worlds*. Malden, Mass.: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Schaffer, Jonathan (2009). On what grounds what. In Ryan Wasserman, David Manley & David Chalmers, *Metametaphysics: New Essays on the Foundations of Ontology*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press. pp. 347-383.
- Wilson, Jessica M. (2014). No work for a theory of Grounding. *Inquiry: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy* 57 (5):535-579.
- Goodman, Nelson (1955). *Fact, Fiction, and Forecast*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Vineberg, Susan (2000). The Logical Status of Conditionalization and its Role in Confirmation. *Poznan Studies in the Philosophy of the Sciences and the Humanities* 71:77-94.
- Buchak, Lara (2014). Belief, credence, and norms. *Philosophical Studies* 169 (2):1-27.
- Friedman, Jane (2019). Inquiry and Belief. *Noûs* 53 (2):296-315.
- Moore, G. E. (1912). *Ethics*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Ross, David (1930). *The Right and the Good*. Oxford, GB: Oxford University Press UK. Edited by Philip Stratton-Lake.
- Parfit, Derek (2008). Overpopulation and the quality of life. In Jesper Ryberg, *The repugnant conclusion*. pp. 7-22.

- Gardner, Molly & Weinberg, Justin (2013). How Lives Measure Up. *Acta Analytica* 28 (1):31-48.
- Davis, Yvonne Angela (2003). *Are Prisons Obsolete?* Seven Stories Press.
- Alex Guerrero, Alexander (2014). Against Elections: The Lottocratic Alternative. *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 42 (2):135-178.

## About Presentations

Each of your presentations should be about 15 minutes long, and should feature a 1-page handout. You are not expected to summarize the reading. Instead, you should select one main point or argument from the reading (ideally this will be one of the two or three most important things in the reading), and present your own response to that point or argument. After your presentation you will conduct a 15-minute Q&A.

Our schedule for presentations will be worked out on the first day of class.

## About Weekly Papers

For each day when there is a reading assignment and you are not giving a presentation (there will be seven days like that), you will be required to turn in a weekly paper on that day's reading assignment(s). A weekly paper is a 2- to 3-page paper (possibly ultra concise) in which you (i) summarize some main idea or thesis from that day's reading assignment(s), (ii) raise some substantive question or objection concerning that main idea or thesis, and (iii) articulate your own solution to the main philosophical problem addressed in that day's reading assignment(s).

Weekly papers are due at 10am on the day of a given reading assignment, and must be submitted through the class website on Canvas. Late papers will be penalized 10 points (out of 100) per day. Extensions may be granted, but only to students who email us ahead of time.

## About Term Papers

Your term paper must be on an approved topic, and should be approximately 3,000-5,000 words (about 8-12 pages) long. It must be submitted on Canvas. Late papers will be penalized at the rate of one letter grade per day, but extensions are available to those who request them ahead of time. Term papers are due at noon on December 10<sup>th</sup>.

## Academic Integrity

Since the integrity of the academic enterprise of any institution of higher education requires honesty in scholarship and research, academic honesty is required of all students at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. For more information on campus policies, please visit the UMass Amherst Faculty Senate website on Academic Integrity:

<https://www.umass.edu/senate/book/academic-regulations-academic-integrity-policy>.

Note: The use of AI in the writing of weekly papers, term papers, or presentations for this class is explicitly prohibited.

## Accommodations

The University of Massachusetts Amherst is committed to providing an equal educational opportunity for all students. If you have a documented physical, psychological, or learning disability on file with Disability Services (DS), you may be eligible for reasonable academic accommodations to help you succeed in this course. If you have a documented disability that requires an accommodation, please notify me within the first two weeks of the semester so that we may make appropriate arrangements. For further information, please visit the UMass Amherst Disability Services website:

<https://www.umass.edu/disability-services/>.

## Title IX

Title IX at UMass Amherst protects against unlawful discrimination based on sex, sex-based harassment, and retaliation by students, employees, or third parties who are participating or attempting to participate in the University's education program or activity. Many campus resources (including counseling, advocacy, and medical care) are available to support you, even if you do not formally report an incident.

For more information please visit the UMass Amherst Equal Opportunity & Access website:

<https://www.umass.edu/equalopportunity/titleix>.

## Schedule

Sep 3      Introduction to Proseminar

Sep 10     Rudolph Carnap, "The Elimination of Metaphysics Through Logical Analysis of Language" [LH].  
               Karen Bennett, "Composition, Co-location, and Metaontology" [TC].

Sep 17     Rudolph Carnap, "Empiricism, Semantics, and Ontology" [JC].  
               Karen Benett, "There is No Special Problem with Metaphysics" [MW].

Sep 24     Morton White, "The Analytic and the Synthetic: An Untenable Dualism" [YA].  
               Herbert Grice, Peter Strawson, "In Defense of a Dogma" [LH].

Oct 1      David Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds*, Sections 1.1-1.5 [MW], and pages 202-204 [JC] and 211-213 [YA].

Oct 8      Jonathan Schaffer, "On What Grounds What" [TC].  
               Jessica Wilson, "No Work for a Theory of Grounding" [MW].

Oct 15     Nelson Goodman, "Fact, Fiction, and Forecast," Chapter 3 [JC].  
               Susan Vineberg, "The Logical Status of Conditionalization and its role in Confirmation" [TC].

Oct 22     Lara Buchak, "Belief, Credence, and Norms" [LH].  
               Jane Friedman, "Inquiry and Belief" [YA].

Oct 29     G.E. Moore, *Ethics*, Chapters I and II [JC].  
               W.D. Ross, *The Right and the Good*, Chapter II [MW].

Nov 5      Derek Parfit, "Overpopulation and the Quality of Life" [TC].  
               Molly Gardner, Justin Weinberg, "How Lives Measure Up" [YA].

Nov 12     Angela Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?* Chapters 1-3 [LH, TC].

Nov 19     Angela Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?* Chapters 4-6 [LH, MW].

Dec 3      Alex Guerrero, "Against Elections: The Lottocratic Alternative" [JC, YA].

Dec 10     ***Term papers due at noon***