**Metaphysics**

**Philosophy 345 B (11458) –– Spring 2020**

Instructor: Felipe G. A. Moreira

Room: Dooly Memorial 204

Time: Monday, Wednesday and Friday 9:05AM - 9:55AM

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Office Hours: Monday, Wednesday and Friday 2:30-3:30 PM at my office (Ashe 715) and by appointment (Let me know in advance if you would like to meet)

Website: Blackboard (all required reading are available on Blackboard)

**Class Description**

The history of metaphysics is a history of disputes regarding which no consensus has been reached. The aim of this class is to approach several of such disputes in giving an overview of the history of metaphysics as well as drawing all kinds of parallels between metaphysics and politics. The core questions raised in the class are: What is Donald Trump’s God? Is there a God of capitalism? What is justice? What is a Platonic form? Is there a Christian God? Does the Christian God sanction war? What kinds of sexual practices are sanctioned by the Christian God? Can skepticism be answered? Can I doubt that I exist? Is Descartes’s argument for God’s existence persuasive? Is God to be blamed for my errors? Do we have immaterial souls distinct from our material bodies? Should we believe in the Christian God for practical purposes? Is metaphysics to be committed to the flames? Are there miracles? Can metaphysics provide knowledge of things-in-themselves? Is metaphysics a legitimate epistemic inquiry vis-à-vis mathematics and the empirical sciences? If metaphysics is not a legitimate epistemic inquiry, what role can it play? Is the Christian God dead? Can there be a superman? Is Cristian metaphysics a disease? What is metaphysics? Do metaphysical statements make sense? Do entities have accidental and essential properties? Can metaphysics be politically neutral or is it always approached by means of a politically engaged view (e.g., a right-wing or a left-wing one)? How is one to react to fact that, since immemorial times, persons have been engaged in disputes in metaphysics?

**Class Goals**

To give an overview of the history of metaphysics

To discuss several political issues of vis-à-vis metaphysical issues

To give students philosophical tools so that they can articulate philosophical works of their own

**Schedule**

P.S1: Come to class having read the text for that date

P.S2: I reserve the right to make changes to topics and dates of reading assignments

P.S3: All mentioned readings are available on Blackboard

P.S4: After lectures are presented in class, they will be posted on Blackboard

**Introduction**

January 13: Outline of the Class. Reading: Syllabus

1. **The Metaphysics of Politics**

January 15, 17 and 22: What is Donald Trump’s God?Readings: Trump’s *The Art of the Deal* (chapter 2) and “Inaugural Address” (January 20th, 2017).

*January 20: No Class (Martin Luther King Jr. Day)*

1. **The Metaphysics of Capitalism**

January 24, 27 and 29: Is there a God of Capitalism? Reading: Max Weber’s *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (“Part 1—The Problem”)

1. **From Socratic Politics to Socratic Metaphysics (or vice-versa)**

January 31 and February 3: What is justice? Reading: Plato’s *Republic* (Book I, recommended focus: 331c-d; 332d; 334e; 335e; 338c-339b; 346e and Book IV (recommended focus: 430e-436b; 445a), and Vaugh’s “Plato: The Really Real”

February 5 and 7: What is a Platonic form? Reading: Plato’s *Republic* (Book VII (*Focus*: 514a-517d), and Melchert’s “Plato’s Knowing the Real and the Good”

1. **From Christian Medieval Metaphysics to Christian Medieval Politics (or vice-versa)**

February 10, 12 and 14: Is there a Christian God? Reading: Aquinas’s *Summa Theologica* — selected excerpts on *God* (Part I, Question 2, Articles 1, 2 and 3). Recommended: Vaughn’s “Anselm and Aquinas”

February 17: Does the Christian God sanction war? Reading: Aquinas’s *Summa Theologica* — selected excerpts on *Just War* (Part II-II, Question 40, Article 1).

February 19: What kinds of sexual practices are sanctioned by the Christian God? Aquinas’s *Summa Theologica* — selected excerpts on *Natural Sexual Practices* (Part II-I, Question 94, Article 2 and Part II-II, Question 154, Article 11).

1. **From “Political Neutrality” to “Scientific” Modern Metaphysics (or vice-versa)**

February 21: Can skepticism be answered? Reading: Descartes’s *1st Meditation*, and Vaughn’s “Descartes”

February 24: Can I doubt that I exist? Reading: Descartes’s 2nd *Meditation*

February 26: Is Descartes’s argument for God’s existence persuasive? Reading: Descartes’s 3rd *Meditation*

February 28: Is God to be blamed for my errors? Reading: Descartes’s 4th and 5th *Meditation*

March 2: Do we have immaterial souls distinct from our material bodies? Reading: Descartes’s 6th *Meditation* (focus: paragraph 78)

1. **The Politics of Modern Christian Metaphysics**

March 4 and 6: Should we believe in the Christian God for practical purposes? Readings: Pascal’s “Wager”, and Ronald Munson’s “Utilitarianism”

*Spring Break: March 7-15*

1. **From “Political Neutrality” to “Scientific” Modern Anti-Metaphysics (or vice-versa)**

March 16: Is metaphysics to be committed to the flames? Readings: Hume’s *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (Chapter 2 and 4), and Vaughn’s “Hume”

March 18: Are there miracles? Readings: Hume’s *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (Chapter 10), and Melchert’s “Hume”

March 20: Can metaphysics provide knowledge of things-in-themselves? Reading: Kant’s *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* (“Preface” and Preamble”), and Vaughn’s “Kant”

March 23: Is metaphysics a legitimate epistemic inquiry vis-à-vis mathematics and the empirical sciences? Reading: Kant’s *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* (“General Question of the Prolegomena”)

March 25: If metaphysics is not a legitimate epistemic inquiry, what role can it play? Reading: Kant’s *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* (“General Question”)

1. **From Anti-Christian Modern Metaphysics to Anti-Christian Politics (or vice-versa)**

March 27: Is the Christian God dead? Readings: Nietzsche’s *Thus Spoke* *Zarathustra* (Zarathustra’s Prologue”), and Vaughn’s “Nietzsche”

**Draft’s Due Date: March 30th (minimum: 500 words)**

March 30: Can there be a superman? Readings: Nietzsche’s *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1st Essay)

April 1: Is Cristian metaphysics a disease?Reading: Nietzsche’s *On the Genealogy of Morals* (2nd Essay)

April 3, 6 and 8: What is metaphysics? Readings: Heidegger’s “What is Metaphysics?”, and Vaughn’s “Heidegger”

1. **From “Political Neutrality” to “Scientific” Contemporary Anti-Metaphysics and Contemporary Analytic Metaphysics (or vice-versa)**

April 10: Do metaphysical statements make sense? Reading: Carnap’s “The Elimination of Metaphysics Through Logical Analysis of Language”

April 13 and 15: Do entities have accidental and essential properties? Reading: Kripke’s *Naming and Necessity* (1st and 2nd Lecture)

1. **The Politics of Metaphysics**

April 17, 20 and 22: Can metaphysics be politically neutral or is it always approached by means of a politically engaged view (e.g., a right-wing or a left-wing one)? Reading: Selected excerpts from Deleuze, and Deleuze’s and Guattari’s “How Do You Make Yourself a Body Without Organs?”

**Conclusion**

April 24: Review of the Class

**Final Paper’s Due Date: April 29th (minimum: 1500 words). There is no final exam**

**Requirements**

**Participation Points:** **20%**. Participation in this class is mandatory. Students should make valuable contributions to discussions at least once a week. **Participation points are not “symbolic”. Students who do not participate in class and/or disrespect the behavioral rules stated in what follows will lose participation points. Students who constantly disrespect behavioral rules may lose *all* participation points, and their final papers will be graded more severely.**

**Take Home Assignments Points: 50 %**. Students should submit hard copies of their take-home assignments at the beginning of every class, except the first one. **Take home assignments must be typed.** These assignments will be worthy between 1% to 2% each, and they will ask you to answer a question related to the required readings. Use your best judgment in determining the length of your response. Some assignments will require you to write a single phrase; others will require you to write one paragraph or two. **Submissions of take-home assignments by e-mail are not allowed. If you cannot come to class, ask a friend to submit your assignment in your behalf. A schedule with all the take-home assignments can be downloaded on Blackboard**. You should keep all of your graded take-home assignments in a file. If you request a revision of your take-home assignment grade in the end of the class, you will need to present copies of all your graded assignments.

**Final Paper: 30 %**. The final paper must address any dispute in metaphysics and have **at least 1500 words**. **If you want to earn writing credits for this class, you should also submit a draft.** The draft must have **at least 500 words**. If you do not need writing credits, I still recommend you submit a draft. Your drafts will receive comments and you are expected to revise them in accordance with such comments before submitting your final paper. **The draft and the final paper should be submitted on Blackboard**; no hard copies are required. On Blackboard, you will also find **Final Paper’s Topics** and the **Evaluative Criteria** adopted to grade them. **The due dates are:**

**Draft: March 30th (minimum: 500 words)**

**Final Paper: April 29th (minimum: 1500 words)**

**Mental Disorder**

In case you have a mental disorder (e.g., depression, anxiety, etc), you should let me know **in private** **by the end of the first week of class and provide proper medical documentation that attests to your condition**. Depending on your case, an alternative evaluation might be given. **This opportunity will not be given to students who have a mental disorder, but only approach me late in the semester (e.g., in April or even only after the end of classes).**

**Grading**

There will be no curve, and the following grading scale will apply: F: 0-59% D: 60-66% D+: 67-69% C-: 70-72% C: 73-76% C+: 77-79% B-: 80-82% B: 83-86% B+: 87-89%   
A-: 90-92% A: 93-100% A+: **I may give an A+ to the best student in the class; someone who besides achieving an A score, writes the most original paper of the class.**

**Late assignments**

Make every attempt to complete your work by the due date. If you see that you cannot complete an assignment on time, please notify me **before the deadline**. The only accepted excuses are: (i) illness for which you have a doctor’s note, (ii) a university sponsored activity taking place at the time an assignment is due, or (iii) death or family crisis, with proper documentation provided.

**Cheating and Plagiarism**

**Cheating and plagiarism** **will not be tolerated**. All work must be your own. Quotations from other sources must be acknowledged. Close and extensive paraphrasing should not be used. You may and are encouraged to talk with others and discuss the material with them in preparing to write your own work. Yet, the finished product should be clearly attributable to you and you alone. See the *University of Miami Honor Code* for more information on what constitutes cheating and plagiarism –– and how it might be dealt with suspension from the University. Moreover, **note that Blackboard’s safe assignment makes it very easy for teachers to identify plagiarism**.

**Attendance**

I will allow you **five** unexcused absences. **After that, you will lose 1% of your final grade per absence. If you have more than 50% absences, you will fail the course.** The only accepted excuses for missing a class are the following: (i) illness for which you have a doctor’s note, (ii) a university sponsored activity taking place at the time an assignment is due, (iii) death or family crisis, with proper documentation provided; or (iv) religious holiday. The policy of the university regarding religious holidays is that students must inform the instructor at the beginning of the semester of any classes they will have to miss owing to a religious holiday. Otherwise, such absences will count as unexcused. Moreover, **it is your responsibility to sign the attendance sheet every class.**

**Behavioral Rules of the Class**

**Students should *not* use cell phones or any other electronic equipment (tablets, computers, etc.) during class. Students should *not* talk with other students regarding matters not related to the class. Students should *not* sleep in class. Students should *not* arrive late without providing justification. Students should *not* leave the class before its end without providing justification. Students should *not* come to class just to sign the attendance sheet. Students should *not* disrespect me, other students or the content of the class.**