

**METAPHYSICS OF SCIENCE FOR A SOCIAL WORLD
PHIL 191: VARIABLE TOPICS RESEARCH SEMINAR
THURSDAY 2:00-4:45
BUNCHE 1265**

INSTRUCTOR CONTACT AND OFFICE HOURS

Katrina Elliott
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12:00-2:00 Thursday, 334 Dodd Hall (and via Zoom CCLE link)

DESCRIPTION

Metaphysics of Science for a Social World pairs recent work in philosophy of gender, philosophy of race, philosophy of disability, and social ontology with classic readings in the philosophy of science. My goal is to argue that many features of the study of social kinds and dynamics, which might have seemed unique to “soft sciences”, have analogues in features of the study of physical kinds and dynamics, including chemistry and physics. However, we will also discuss readings that challenge core assumptions common to analytic philosophy of science and analytic studies of the social world.

MEETING SCHEDULE

Our course will meet in person and via Zoom for **three hours** once a week, for a total of **ten classes**. Our meetings will consist in student presentations and discussion; rather than lecturing during class time, I will post weekly videos in advance of our meetings that focus on aspects of the reading that I find particularly interesting or important for our class goals.

Starting week 2, everyone enrolled in the class will introduce a short discussion topic or question concerning each week’s reading, which will occupy us for roughly 10-15 minutes per discussion.

A weekly zoom link will be posted on our course website for students who are unable to meet in person.

COURSE MATERIAL

All course readings are available on our website.

In at least 72 hours in advance of each week’s meeting, I will post videos discussing various aspects of the approaching meeting’s readings. These videos are not comprehensive summaries or outlines of the week’s reading, and are not a replacement for the assigned reading.

GRADING

Everyone taking the course for credit will present on one aspect of the assigned reading each week (apart from week 1). These presentations can raise questions, lodge objections, or highlight particularly interesting passages. Each brief presentation will be followed by time for discussion.

Everyone taking the course for a letter grade will also submit three roughly 1000 word essays near the end of each unit. Essay prompts will be available on CCLE. Those essays will be due on: **Friday, Week 4; Friday, Week 8; Friday, Exam Week**

READING SCHEDULE

I. TAXONOMY

A. WEEK 1: INTRODUCTION AND ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING

Bokulich, A. (2014). Pluto and the 'Planet Problem': Folk Concepts and Natural Kinds in Astronomy. *Perspectives on Science* 22 (4):464-490.

B. WEEK 2: THEORY CHANGE

Haslanger, S. (2000). Gender and race: (What) are they? (What) do we want them to be? *Noûs* 34 (1):31–55.

Kuhn, T. S. (1962). Chapter 10: Revolutions as Changes of World View. *The structure of scientific revolutions*. University of Chicago Press: Chicago.

C. WEEK 3: MEANING AND ESSENCE

LaPorte, J. (1996). Chemical Kind Term Reference and the Discovery of Essence. *Noûs*, 30(1), 112–132. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2216306>

Bettcher, T.M. (2013). "Trans Women and the Meaning of 'Woman'". In A. Soble, N. Power & R. Halwani (eds.), *Philosophy of Sex: Contemporary Readings, Sixth Edition*. Rowan & Littlefield. pp. 233-250.

D. WEEK 4: ALTERNATIVE PERSPECTIVES

****ESSAY 1 IS DUE AT 5:00 PM ON FRIDAY, WEEK 4****

Starr, P. (1992). Social Categories and Claims in the Liberal State. *Social Research*, 59(2), 263–295. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40970693>

Escobar, A. (2020). Introduction and Chapter 1. *Pluriversal Politics: The Real and the Possible*. Durham: Duke University Press

II. REDUCTION AND PRIORITY

A. WEEK 5: ELIMINATIVISM AND EMERGENCE

Churchland, P. M. (1981). Eliminative Materialism and the Propositional Attitudes. *The Journal of Philosophy*, 78(2), 67–90

Hendry, RF. 2019, "Emergence in Chemistry: Substance and Structure", in S. Gibb, R. Hendry, and T. Lancaster (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Emergence*, Abingdon: Routledge, 339–351.

B. WEEK 6: REDUCTION

Fodor, J. A. (1974). Special Sciences (Or: The Disunity of Science as a Working Hypothesis). *Synthese*, 28(2), 97–115. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20114958>

Ritchie, K. (2020), Social Structures and the Ontology of Social Groups. *Philos Phenomenol*

Res, 100: 402-424. <https://doi.org/10.1111/phpr.12555>

C. WEEK 7: CONSTRUCTION AND REALISM

Haslanger, Sally (1995). Ontology and Social Construction. *Philosophical Topics* 23 (2):95-125.

Williams, S.J. (1999), Is anybody there? Critical realism, chronic illness and the disability debate. *Sociology of Health & Illness*, 21: 797-819

D. WEEK 8: ALTERNATIVE PERSPECTIVES

****ESSAY 2 IS DUE AT 5:00 PM ON FRIDAY, WEEK 8****

Latour B. How to Talk About the Body? the Normative Dimension of Science Studies. *Body & Society*. 2004;10(2-3):205-229.

III. DYNAMICS

A. WEEK 9: NATURAL LAWS

Cartwright, N. (1980), Do the laws of physics state the facts?. *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, 61: 75-84.

Lundberg, G. A. (1938). The Concept of Law in the Social Sciences. *Philosophy of Science*, 5(2), 189–203. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/184630>

B. WEEK 10: CAUSAL MODELLING AND CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Bright, L. K.; Malinsky, Daniel & Thompson, Morgan (2016). Causally Interpreting Intersectionality Theory. *Philosophy of Science* 83 (1):60-81.

****ESSAY 3 IS DUE AT 5:00 PM ON FRIDAY, FINAL EXAM WEEK****