

Phil 125: Philosophy of Science (Contemporary)

UCLA, Fall 2018

WF 10-11:50

Royce Hall 160

Katie Elliott

334 Dodd

kelliott@humnet.ucla.edu

310.267.4847

Office hours: WF 12-1

Readings

Required Text: Philosophy of Science: Contemporary Readings (Balashov and Rosenberg)

Please bring your text with you to class. If there is some reason why it is difficult for you to acquire a copy of the text, let me know—I might be able to help.

Any additional readings will be located on our course website.

Evaluation

Breakdown:

Exams (3): 15%, 35%, 35%

Quizzes: 15%

Exams: You will be assigned 3 take-home essay exams throughout the course of the quarter. The first exam will be worth 15%, the second 35%, and the third 35%. You will have one week to complete each exam. Unexcused late exams will be docked 10% for each week that they are late. Exam extensions will be given in **unusual** circumstances, but **only if** they are requested as soon as is practically possible. Do **NOT** wait until after the exam is due to request an extension in light of some extenuating circumstances that occurred before the exam was due.

Quizzes: In order to encourage attendance and reading, I'll give a short quiz at the start of class **once** every week. The quiz will be designed so as to check for basic comprehension of the day's assigned reading. Your grades on those quizzes will determine **15%** of your final grade.

Quiz Makeup: Quizzes missed for **any reason** are unexcused. However, you have the opportunity to make-up 3 quiz scores over the course of the quarter by writing a 2-page (double spaced, times new roman) reaction paper to the reading assigned for the quiz day missed. You are under no obligation to make up missed quizzes. All make up quizzes are due on the last day of class.

Completion: To pass this class, you must have completed all three exams. Your grade is a function of your scores on assignments only if you have completed all the exams.

Conduct Code: In accord with the UCLA Student Conduct Code (available in full at http://www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu/Code_choice.php), take care to submit only work that is your own.

Redistributing essay weights: In an effort to provide extra incentive to improve your essay performance, I will allow you to redistribute 10% of the weighting in your three essay exams however you see fit. For example, instead of having exam 1 be worth 15%, exam 2 be worth 35%, and exam 3 be worth 35%, you might elect to have exam 1 be worth 5%, exam 2 be worth 40%, and exam 3 be worth 40%.

PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING TO CAVEATS:

1. Redistributing the weights is completely optional. If I do not hear from you, I will not redistribute the weights for your grade.
2. If you would like to redistribute the essay weights, you must let me know via email **by 10 am on December 14TH**. That means you will need to commit to any redistributions *prior* to knowing the grade of your final essay (which is also due by 10 am on December 14th).

Reading Schedule

While I will do my best to keep us on the following reading schedule, it is **subject to change** (with the following exceptions: exam dates will never be *earlier* than the schedule indicates). Every reading listed is from our book, unless otherwise noted.

Confirmation and Theory Choice

September 28th:

Course Introduction

October 3rd:

“On Induction” by Bertrand Russell

October 5th:

“The Grue Paradox” by Peter Achinstein

October 10th:

“Seeing and Seeing As” by N. Russell Hanson

October 12th:

“Two Dogmas of Empiricism” by W.V. Quine

October 17th:

“Let’s Razor Ockham’s Razor’ by Elliott Sober

October 19th:

“Objectivity, Value Judgment, and Theory Choice” by Thomas Kuhn

Realism and Anti-Realism

**October 24th: Essay I Assigned (Due November 2nd)
[Kuhn Discussion]**

October 26th:

Catch up and Review

October 31th:

“The Theoretician’s Dilemma” by Carl Hempel

November 2nd: Essay I Due

“A Confutation of Convergent Realism” by Larry Laudan

November 7th:

“Scientific Realism versus Constructive Empiricism: A Dialogue”

November 9th:

“A Case for Scientific Realism” by Ernan McMullin

Scientific Explanation and the Laws of Nature

Monday, November 14th:

Exam II assigned—DUE NOVEMBER 28TH

Catch up and review.

Wednesday, November 16th:

“Two Models of Scientific Explanation” by Carl Hempel

November 21st:

Cancelled Class

November 23rd:

THANKSGIVING BREAK

November 28th:

“Explanatory Unification and the Causal Structure of the World” by Phillip Kitcher

November 30th:

“A Neo-Humean Perspective: Laws as Regularities” by Norman Swartz

December 5th:

“The Laws of Nature” and “Humean Supervenience Debugged” by David Lewis

December 7th:

Exam III Assigned—DUE DECEMBER 14TH (AT 10 AM)

Wrap up and Review.