

Metaphysics DISCLAIMER

Phil 310, Metaphysics, is a course in some core topics in Western Philosophy, including the Free Will Problem, the Mind-Body Problem, related problems in Philosophy of Mind, and the Problem of Personal Identity. If you're interested in what these involve, you can find long discussions online in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy:

<http://plato.stanford.edu/>.

However, even after this careful description, I still get students who misunderstand the nature of the course, and expect it to be about astrology, etc. etc. . For that reason, I have composed the following "boxed" statement.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

"Metaphysics" as a field of study within the academic area of Philosophy is very different from "Metaphysics" as the label of a bookshelf in Border's Books. This is a Philosophy course. It is not about what Border's Books calls Metaphysics.

The popular (Border's Books) understanding of Metaphysics is that it is the study of paranormal phenomena, such as extrasensory perception, out-of-body travel, reincarnation, and auras. **None of these topics will be seriously discussed in this course!** It doesn't much matter what my opinions are about the matter, but you may want to know. I believe in science. I do not believe in pseudoscience. I believe that no one has extra-sensory perception (even though perception is a very complicated and interesting thing). I do not believe in reincarnation, or in out-of-body travel. In fact I have published articles in anti-paranormal journals, and I'm somewhat famous for my skeptical refutation of the paranormal Hundredth Monkey Phenomenon. (See my web page for details if you're interested.)

I do not believe that I'm any more narrow-minded than the next person on these topics. But if you are a fan of paranormal phenomenon, you will probably consider me to be very narrow-minded. That's ok with me -- you have a right to consider me narrow-minded if you want to. But the important thing is this: *You should not take this course because you expect to study astrology, ESP, and so on.* I will not ask my students to study topics that I consider foolish, and I consider astrology, etc., very foolish.

I am stating this SO THAT YOU WILL KNOW WHAT TO EXPECT!!!

So if you signed up for the course *because* you are interested in the supernatural or paranormal, *please drop the course.* You *will not* be able to pass the course by concentrating your attention on the paranormal, and trying to prove its existence to me. Many people have tried. None of them has passed the course. Please don't add your student record to the gruesome list of people who believed that they could convince Amundson that they possessed ESP.

I have had some bad experiences on this topic. Some very sincere students have gotten angry and even belligerent because I required them to study and write about theories that they disagreed with. I am teaching this course the way the American Philosophical Association affirms is the academically responsible way to teach Metaphysics. Please, if that is not a course that you want to take, do not take this one.