

SEP 27 2004

REQUEST FOR APPROVAL TO USE W-DESIGNATION

LSC # 244
Action _____

COVER SHEET: Request for Approval to Use W-Designation

TYPE I. PROFESSOR COMMITMENT

- (x) Professor Eric M. Rubenstein Phone x3575
- (x) Writing Workshop? (If not at IUP, where? when?) Yes
- (x) Proposal for one W-course (see instructions below) Attached
- (x) Agree to forward syllabi for subsequently offered W-courses? Yes

TYPE II. DEPARTMENT COURSE

- () Department Contact Person _____ Phone _____
- () Course Number/Title _____
- () Statement concerning departmental responsibility _____
- () Proposal for this W-course (see instructions below) _____

TYPE III. SPECIFIC COURSE AND SPECIFIC PROFESSOR(S)

- () Professor(s) _____ Phone _____
- () Course Number/Title _____
- () Proposal for this W-course (see instructions below) _____

SIGNATURES:

Professor(s) *[Signature]* (Eric M. Rubenstein)

Department Chairperson *[Signature]* W. Boone

College Dean *[Signature]* Ann 9/29/04

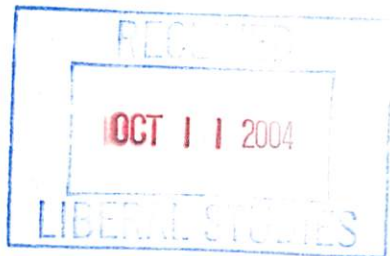
Director of Liberal Studies *[Signature]* Cheryl Sellen 10/14/04

COMPONENTS OF A PROPOSAL FOR A WRITING-INTENSIVE COURSE:

- I. "Writing Summary"--one or two pages explaining how writing is used in the course. First, explain any distinctive characteristics of the content or students which would help the Liberal Studies Committee understand your summary. Second, list and explain the types of writing activities; be especially careful to explain (1) what each writing activity is intended to accomplish as well as the (2) amount of writing, (3) frequency and number of assignments, and (4) whether there are opportunities for revision. If the activity is to be graded, indicate (5) evaluation standards and (6) percentage contribution to the student's final grade.
- II. Copy of the course syllabus.
- III. Two or three samples of assignment sheets, instructions, or criteria concerning writing that are given to students. Limit: 4 pages. (Single copies of longer items, if essential to the proposal, may be submitted to be passed among LSC members and returned to you.)

Please number all pages. Provide one copy to Liberal Studies Committee.

Before you submit: Have you double-checked your proposal against "The Liberal Studies Committee's Most Frequently Asked Questions"?



Proposal for Writing Intensive Course, Type I

Eric M. Rubenstein
Department of Philosophy
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The philosopher Wittgenstein claimed that “What can be said can be said clearly”, and I believe this serves as a good motto for my proposed writing intensive course. Learning to write clearly is both a means for clearer verbal expression, and more generally, for clear thinking. Students learn to think more clearly when they can express their thoughts in clear prose, and thus an essential mission of the undergraduate experience should be to provide students with the skills for clear writing. Put differently, only with clear expression can a student be sure s/he understands the material.

Though it is far too easy to rely on unexplicated jargon or terminology, a goal of all my courses is to help students get beyond such reliance and to learn to express difficult material in their own words. This is especially true in the course under proposal—an upper-level class on Metaphysics. Students tend to range from advanced Philosophy majors to students with little or no background. A primary way to accomplish this stated goal is to have students write several different kinds of papers. Thus I break my writing assignments into three categories: content summaries; analysis papers; and a critical evaluation paper. The first category involves short (1-page) writing assignments in which students are asked to summarize the main points of the assigned reading, culling what is essential from what is not. These are due the day the class is to discuss a particular reading assignment. As a result of having to prepare these summaries, students are more likely to understand the subsequent lecture, as well as to have their own opinions on the material at hand.

The second type of writing has students submitting 4-5 page papers, the chief goal of which is to present in a clear and logical fashion the ideas explored on a particular topic. Students are asked/directed to write concisely, clearly, and to articulate the logical structure of the concepts at issue. Finally, students will submit a long paper that will serve as a critical evaluation of a given topic/author. In this case, students will be asked to both synthesize material they have learned and to bring critical reflection upon their chosen topic. For this assignment, students will submit a draft that will receive feedback from me, as well as from a peer. Students will therefore also be asked to provide critique of another’s work, which should help focus their own writing, as well as offering the chance to learn about another philosophical topic.

In summary, grades for this course will be based solely upon writing assignments, according to the following breakdown

- Weekly One-Page Summaries: 20%
- 2 short papers (4 pages): 45%
- 1 long paper (8 pages): 30%
- Peer-Edit of a Long Paper: 5%

A list of the different writing assignments to be used in the class is provided in the attached “Summary Chart for Writing Assignments”

Summary Chart for Writing Assignments*

A. Writing Assignments					
Assignment Title	# of Assignments	# of total pages	Graded (Yes/No)	Opportunity for Revision (Yes/No)	Written Assignment represents what % of final course grade
Weekly Summaries	10	10	Yes	No	20%
Analysis Papers	2	8	Yes	No	45%
Term Paper	1	8	Yes	Yes	30%
Peer-Edit	1	2	Yes	No	5%
Totals	14	28	NA	NA	100%

B. Examinations (Complete only if you intend to use essay exams/short answers as part of the required number of pages of writing.)			
Exams	Approx.% of exam that is essay or short answer	Anticipated # of pages for essay or short answer, or approx. word count	Exam constitutes what % of final course grade
1.			
2.			
3.			
Totals			

*Total writing assignments should contain at least 5000 words (approximately 15-20 typed pages) in two or more separate assignments; written assignments should be a major part of the final grade—at least 50% or more.

* *

Note: The official catalogue description for this course is as follows:

PHIL 420 - Metaphysics 3c-01-3sh

Explores the nature of reality through investigation of such concepts as substance, cause, freedom, and God. Draws on both historical and contemporary writings. Other topics may include the nature of space and time, the role of language in comprehending reality, the possibility of non-sensory knowledge, the nature of possibility and necessity.

The course I am proposing includes topics listed in the official course description, as well as several others (the so-called Problem of Universals, and an exploration of Wittgenstein's metaphysics in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*) that are standard issues/texts addressed in the field of metaphysics. I believe I am offering a fairly typical course on Metaphysics, both in the readings chosen and in the topics to be addressed.

In summary, the course description provided on the proposed syllabus is intended to simply provide more detail about the topics mentioned in the official catalogue description.

Finally, the official, approved course objectives for this course are as follows:

Course Objectives:

- 1) To introduce students to an understanding of the discipline itself and its various approaches.
- 2) To introduce the most fundamental concepts concerning the nature of reality which underlay and determine the other branches of philosophy.
- 3) To enable the student to recognize some of the main historical forms in which metaphysical concepts appear.

To this I have added one for this writing intensive proposal:

- 4) To develop writing skills sufficient for the clear expression of difficult concepts and ideas.

Syllabus Proposal
Philosophy 420 (W)
Metaphysics
Fall 2005

Eric M. Rubenstein
438 Sutton Hall

erubenst@iup.edu

Catalogue Description: PHIL 420 - Metaphysics 3c-01-3sh

Explores the nature of reality through investigation of such concepts as substance, cause, freedom, and God. Draws on both historical and contemporary writings. Other topics may include the nature of space and time, the role of language in comprehending reality, the possibility of non-sensory knowledge, the nature of possibility and necessity.

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* *

Course Description

Metaphysics is that branch of philosophy that studies the nature of reality. As a philosophical investigation, however, it is distinct from empirical investigations performed by the physical sciences. Aristotle spoke of metaphysics as the study of "Being qua Being". We will set our sights a bit lower, focusing on several long-standing metaphysical issues.

Our first topic involves the traditional distinction between substance and property. What are each and how are they related? Is a substance more than the sum of its properties? If so, what is it? Are properties common to different substances? Can properties exist without substance?

We'll also explore the nature of possibility and necessity. We will ask such questions as: What in reality, if anything, makes the sentence, "Howard Dean is president" possibly true? On the other hand, what makes "There is a square circle in your notebook" necessarily false? Contemporary answers involve the notion of possible worlds. We will explore various debates and questions that arise about such worlds.

Finally, we'll examine the metaphysics of Wittgenstein's famous *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* with an eye to how it transforms the landscape of traditional metaphysical debates.

This is a writing intensive class, thus, an overriding goal of this class will be to develop the writing skills essential to success in any philosophy class and the world beyond. This will be accomplished by the writing of several different kinds of papers, ranging from short summaries to a long term paper.

Course Objectives:

Required Texts

(FM): *Contemporary Readings in the Foundations of Metaphysics*, ed. by S. Laurence and C. MacDonald (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998).

(TLP): Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. translation by D.F. Pears and B.F. McGuinness. (London: Routledge, 1995).

Evaluation

Weekly One-Page Summaries: 20%

2 short papers (4 pages): 45%

1 long paper (8 pages): 30%

Peer-Edit of a Long Paper: 5%

Note: A draft of the long paper is due December 2. Submitting this draft is mandatory. You will receive comments and feedback on your draft, putting you in position to submit an improved final version. You will also provide peer-edit feedback on another person's draft. Details on the procedures for drafts and peer-edits will be provided.

* *

Please do not hesitate to let me know if you have any disabilities, visible or not, that may affect your performance in this class. Appropriate accommodations can be made. Your attendance and participation is expected.

* *

Please carefully read the following statement regarding plagiarism.

Academic honesty is an essential component of intellectual development. And it is a vital element in the mission of this University. As such, you should familiarize yourself with IUP's policy on academic honesty, found in the Student Handbook. I will not tolerate any violations of this policy, and all violations will be prosecuted. If you have any questions about the policy or more generally about what counts as plagiarism, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Schedule

Aug 26: Introduction

The Metaphysics of Substance

- 28: "Bare Particulars", FM pp.248-53.
- Sept 2: Labor Day
4: "Bare Particulars", FM pp.248-53.
- 9: "Particulars Reclothed", FM pp.255-8.
11: "Another Look at Bare Particulars", FM pp.259-63.
- 16: "Three Versions of the Bundle Theory", FM pp.264-272.
18: "Three Versions of the Bundle Theory", FM pp.264-272.
- 23: "Beyond Substrata and Bundles", FM pp.233-45.

The Metaphysics of Properties

- 25: "Against 'Ostrich' Nominalism" (Handout) **FIRST PAPER DUE**
- 30: "Against 'Ostrich' Nominalism" (Handout); Lewis, FM, pp. 163-173.
- Oct 2: "The Metaphysics of Abstract Particulars", FM pp.351-62.
- 7: "The Metaphysics of Abstract Particulars", FM pp.351-62.
9: "Particulars in Particular Clothing", FM pp.364-82
14: "Particulars in Particular Clothing", FM pp.364-82.
16: "Tropes and Other Things", FM pp.329-347.

The Metaphysics of Possibility

- 21: "Possible Worlds", Lewis, FM pp.96-101.
23: "Possible Worlds", Lewis, FM pp.96-101. **SECOND PAPER DUE**
- 28: "Possible Worlds", Stalnaker, FM pp.103-16.
30: "Possible Worlds", Stalnaker, FM pp.103-16.
- Nov 4: "Ways Worlds Could Be", FM pp.117-25.
6: "Ways Worlds Could Be", FM pp.117-25.
- 11: "Possible Worlds and Possibilia", FM pp.83-94.
13: "Possible Worlds and Possibilia", FM pp.83-94.

The Metaphysics of Wittgenstein's Tractatus

- 18: TLP: Preface; 1 - 2.063
20: TLP: 2.1 - 3.24
- 25: TLP: 4- 4.1212
27: Thanksgiving Break

Dec 2: TLP: 5.61 - 5.641 **DRAFT OF FINAL PAPER DUE**
4: TLP: 6.37 - 7 **PEER EDIT DUE**

Final Paper Due Last Day of Exam Week (Date to be Announced)

Sample A
First Paper Assignment
PHIL 420 (W)
Eric M. Rubenstein

You are to choose one of the following topics for your paper.

1) Lewis argues that his Counterpart Theory is to be preferred over one of Transworld Identity. Your task is to a) explain each of these theories and what problems they are designed to solve; b) explain one significant objection to each view that has been raised; and c) briefly discuss which strategy seems the best.

2) In Lycan's article, "The Trouble with Possible Worlds", he claims that all theories of possibility are best viewed as responses to what he calls in §III, 'the real problem'. Your task is to a) explain Lycan's objection; b) explain how both Lewis and the Combinatorialist attempt to respond to the objection; and c) briefly discuss which strategy seems the best for coping with the objection.

* *

Note: For this paper, I am primarily interested in a careful and detailed analysis of the issue. Only a small portion of this assignment is to be dedicated to a critical discussion of the topic. Later in the semester there will be opportunities for you to explain at length your own views. For now I want you to focus mostly on clearly articulating other people's positions

* *

Assessment:

As mentioned, this paper is an opportunity to cultivate and display your ability for clear philosophical thinking. As such, I will be basing your grade on the following criteria:

- a) Clarity of presentation of what the philosophical problem at issue is.
- b) Depth of understanding of why the objection you discuss is an important objection.
- c) Quality of the writing of your paper.
- d) Extent to which difficult concepts and terms are explained thoroughly and adequately.

* *

This essay should be 4-5 pages, typed, double-spaced, with standard margins and fonts.
It is due in class **October 10**.

SAMPLE B
Second Paper Assignment
PHIL 420 (W)
Eric M. Rubenstein

You are to choose one from among the following for your second paper assignment.

- 1) What is the thesis of the Identity of Indiscernibles? Is the thesis true or not?
- 2) Are all identities necessary identities, or can there be contingent identity?
- 3) Do material objects have temporal parts in addition to spatial parts?
- 4) What is an adequate account of personal identity? Can beings be related by the relation of survival, without being identical to each other?

Note: In all these assignments you should take particular care to explain the issue at hand. Should you choose to address an objection to a particular thesis or principle, make sure you pick the best objection you can think of, and then try to respond to it. In other words, since you have only a short amount of space to work with, don't take a 'shotgun approach' whereby you raise several objections in a superficial manner. Instead, focus on one in great detail.

* *

Your essay should be 5 pages long, typed, double-spaced, with standard fonts and margins. It is due in class on **Wed. Nov. 14.**

SAMPLE C
FINAL PAPER ASSIGNMENT
PHIL 420 (W)
Eric M. Rubenstein

Your task is to write an 8 page paper on any of the philosophical topics we have covered this semester. Which one you choose to write on is up to you entirely. The only constraint is that you are not to write on a topic you have written one of your 5 page papers on.

Here are some suggested topics, but again, you are not bound to any of these.

- 1) What is the proper understanding of the term, "I"? What light does a proper linguistic analysis shed on the nature of the self?
- 2) Why does Hume retract his account of the Self in the Appendix to the *Treatise*? (The retraction is included in the reading I gave you.)
- 3) Does time have a beginning? Could it? Is this a purely empirical matter?
- 4) Can there be impossible worlds? Why would we want to rule them out entirely?
- 5) Is Blackburn's Quasi-Realism a satisfactory account of morals or modals?
- 6) What important metaphysical theses, if any, can be deduced from the claim that there can't be errors in self-identification?
- 7) Is Quine's account of ontic commitment satisfactory?
- 8) Having spent a semester thinking about ontology, what is your decided opinion about *holes*?
- 9) Is God bound by the laws of logic?

ADDITIONAL MATTERS

Throughout the semester I have tried to give writing exercises that strengthen your critical thinking and writing skills. I have also sought to rein you in a bit: to keep you from writing paragraph after paragraph without focus and discipline. Now is the occasion to loosen my grip: you are hereby freed to write on any topic you wish. But now is also the time to put those developed critical skills to work. So, in choosing a topic, be sure to find one that is a manageable size, one that is grounded in the readings and discussion from the semester, and one that you can write on in a clear, articulate, careful manner. In other words, still strive for a carefully reasoned piece of prose.

Some of the topics suggested above require additional readings. Feel free to ask me (in advance) for guidance. Don't, however, think of this as a research paper. I'm not interested in hearing what 6 people have to say about a topic. Instead, I'm interested in seeing what *you* have to say about complex material.

Your essay is due in the Philosophy and Religious Studies office (452 Sutton Hall) by **Friday, Dec. 2 at 4pm**. You may also choose to email your essay to erubens@grove.iup.edu before that deadline.