

## Metaphysics | PIU44041

Year	Senior Sophister
ECTS Credits	10
Contact Hours	22 (11 x 2-hour seminars)
Pre-requisite	None
Semester	1
Module Leader & Lecturer	Professor John Divers
Contact Email	<a href="mailto:diversj@tcd.ie">diversj@tcd.ie</a>

### Module Outline:

The module treats a question in the metaphysics of modality: *How do our Counterfactual judgments relate to Reality?* Counterfactual judgments proceed from the understanding that the world was **not** a certain way to a claim about how the world would have been had it been **so**:

- If the sugar cube had been dropped into the beaker of hot water, it would have dissolved.
- If the USA had not used the atomic bomb in 1945 the number of people killed in World War II would have been greater.
- If I had bet heads on that coin-toss, I would have won
- If the United goal had not been wrongly ruled out, they would have gone on to win.

The fundamental metaphysical debate over counterfactuals is between realists and antirealists. Realists argue that counterfactuals tell us that reality extends beyond what is actually the case. Antirealists argue that counterfactuals are instruments that help us understand better a reality that is exhausted by what is actually the case.

In the first half of the module we study the main themes from a classic text: Counterfactuals by David Lewis (1973). In the second half, we advance towards an understanding of the contemporary debate.

### Assessment:

- 2 x Essays: 1 mid-module (50%) and 1 end of module (50%).

### Recommended Reading:

The following source functions both as an introduction to this topic and a companion to study throughout the module.

Starr, W., "Counterfactuals", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2022 Edition), Edward N. Zalta & Uri Nodelman (eds.), URL = [<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2022/entries/counterfactuals/>](https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2022/entries/counterfactuals/).