



Metaphysics | PIU44043

Year	Senior Sophister
ECTS Credits	5
Contact Hours	22 hours
Pre-requisite	None
Semester	1
Module Leader & Lecturer	Alison Fernandes
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Module Outline:

One pressing problem in metaphysics concerns temporal asymmetry of causation: why causes always come before their effects. The fundamental laws of nature, by and large, determine event equally well in both temporal directions. There is no inbuilt direction in time or the laws. Yet our experience suggests that causes always come before their effects. So, how does this temporal asymmetry of causation arise? In this module, we'll explore solutions to this problem from the perspective of scientific metaphysics. While no knowledge of science will be presumed, the module will assume a willingness to consider the relevance of science for deep questions in metaphysics. We'll examine the work of contemporary philosophers who use the challenge of explaining the direction of causation to develop new ideas about time, freedom and agency.

Learning Outcomes:

At the end of this course students will be able to:

- Explain Russell's challenge concerning the temporal asymmetry of causation.



- Discuss and critically evaluate empirical attempts to explain the temporal asymmetry of causation.
- Argue for their own views about the relevance of these programs for understanding our experience of time, freedom and agency.
- Speculate in an informed manner about the role of science and experience in philosophy.

Recommended Reading List:

A complete syllabus containing week by week readings will be available on Blackboard, before the module starts. A core text will be the Cambridge Element: The Temporal Asymmetry of Causation <https://stella.catalogue.tcd.ie/iii/encre/record/C___Rb20628910>. You're welcome to look at this in advance to get a sense of the topics and approach we'll be taking. Here is a rough indicative list of topics, by week:

1. Introduction
2. The Metaphysics of Time
3. The Metaphysics of Freedom
4. Russell's Challenge
5. Lewis' Account of Causation
6. Entropy (and first writing exercise)
7. <Reading Week>
8. Statistical Mechanical Accounts of Causation
9. Agency Accounts of Causation
10. Fork Asymmetry Accounts of Causation 2
11. Freedom, Revisited
12. Review (and second writing exercise)



Student Responsibilities:

Students are expected to take an active role in class by listening, asking questions and responding constructively to each other, as well as by participating in class activities. Students are expected to prepare work in advance, by reading the relevant material and preparing questions or points to discuss either in class or on the class discussion board. Required readings are available on Blackboard.

Course Requirements:

Assessment for 5 ECTS:

1 x 2000 word essay (30%)

1 (1 hour) exam (65%)

Attendance at in-class exercises (5%)

In response to the unauthorized use of AI tools in college coursework, a significant proportion of the module's assessment is via an in-person end of term exam. The exam will require students to demonstrate a broad understanding of the module material and use of philosophical critical skills. Students will receive practice in completing exam questions at in-class writing exercises. These exercises will not be graded, but part of your overall mark is given by attendance at these exercises.

The module also requires you to complete 1–2 coursework essays. You will have the option of writing on a set question or on a question of your own choice, at my approval. If you wish to write on a question of your own choice, you must submit a question and a one



paragraph summary of your approach at least two weeks before the paper is due and receive written approval by me for that topic. Failure to do so will require you to submit an essay on one of the set questions. In other words, if you submit a paper on a topic without approval, it will be marked as a response to one of the set questions.

5 ECTS students complete one essay. Students have the option of completing the second essay as a revision of their first essay. In this case, students will be marked partly on how well they respond to instructor feedback. Students may choose to complete a new essay; in which case it must be on a new topic.

Papers are a maximum of 2000 words. Papers that go over this word-count will receive a 5-mark penalty. Papers are due **Monday 1st December** for both 5ECTS and 10ECTS students and **Wednesday 29th November** for 10 ECTS students.

Lateness:

Late essays will be penalized, as per departmental policy, unless an extension is granted. Up to one week late on a paper or assignment receives a 5% penalty (of total possible mark), with 5% taken off per additional week. Contact your college Tutor to request an extension. Extensions must be arranged prior to the submission date.

Papers and exams will be graded using the following classifications:

I 70–100

II.1 60– 69

II.2 50–59

III 40–49

F1 30–39

F2 0–29



Course Policies.

Attendance:

Attendance in class is essential. If you are unable to attend more than one session, please get in touch with me to ensure you can keep up with class work, and do not miss out on important information.

Academic Integrity:

Plagiarism is interpreted by the University as the act of presenting the work of others as one's own work without acknowledgement and is considered as academically fraudulent. The University considers plagiarism to be a major offence, and it is subject to the disciplinary procedures of the University. It is the responsibility of the author of any work to ensure that he/she does not commit plagiarism. Plagiarism can arise from actions such as: (a) copying another student's work; (b) enlisting another person or persons to complete an assignment on the student's behalf; (c) procuring, whether with payment or otherwise, the work or ideas of another; (d) quoting directly, without acknowledgement, from books, articles or other sources, either in printed, recorded or electronic format, including websites and social media; (e) paraphrasing, without acknowledgement, the writings of other authors. A general set of guidelines for students on avoiding plagiarism is available on <http://tcd-ie.libguides.com/plagiarism>. For further details, see your course handbook.

Use of AI tools:

The use of AI tools for the completion of coursework essays or for exam preparation is, in general, not allowed. There are several problems with the use of AI tools: they are unreliable, aren't



traceable to other sources and cannot generally be adequately referenced or retrieved. AI is not allowed, for example, to rewrite one's sentences or paragraphs or to generate content, including references. (You might think of AI as your Uncle AI, who studied philosophy many years ago, and is sometimes fun to talk to—but who is not an academic source, has been known to make things up and who cannot stand in for you as the author of your work.) Only very minimal uses of AI are permitted, including a) using AI in the preliminary research stages for getting ideas about a topic and the appropriate use of terms, b) using AI for suggestions on how particular uses of language can be clarified c), using AI to check whether referencing is complete. In all these permitted uses, AI text is not allowed to be copied directly from a dialogue box to your essay—you must evaluate whether what the AI suggests is something you yourself want to say and write the words afresh. Any textual references or definitions suggested by the AI must be verified by yourself, using appropriate sources.