

THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
Undergraduate Course Outline 2017-2018

Philosophy 1030A:
Understanding Science: How Science Relates to the Natural and Social World

Fall Term 2017
MW 11:30 12:30

Instructor: Wayne C. Myrvold
wmyrvold@uwo.ca

Office: Stevenson Hall 4143

Office Hours: MW 1:30 2:30, or by appointment

DESCRIPTION

This non-essay course is aimed at non-science majors who want to gain an understanding of the place of science in our world and how it relates to other parts of our culture, and at science students who want to gain an appreciation of the place of their discipline in the wider culture.

Science plays a central role in our lives. It is the source of new technological developments, and of information about safety and risks that are relevant to our decisions as individuals and as a society. Yet many people find science disquieting. There is a feeling that science destroys the wonder of nature. Moreover, many people mistrust what scientists tell them.

In this course we will dive into an investigation of the nature of science and its place in modern culture. Among the questions to be addressed are: What distinguishes science from non-science? Are there limits to what science can or should explain? Should we place our trust in science? How can we, as non-scientists, tell whether we should rely on what news reports tell us about the results of scientific studies? What is the relationship between science and religion? What is the role and value of science in a democratic society?

TEXTS

Assigned readings available on the course OWL site.

OBJECTIVES

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REQUIREMENTS

Attendance and active participation in class discussion; attendance and active participation in tutorials; written assignments; midterm & final tests.

Tutorial participation: 5%

Written Assignments:

1 Evaluation of media article (Due Oct. 17) 20%

2*a*) Experimental proposal (Due Oct. 30) 5

Topics

Module I. (2 weeks) *Science, media, and PR.* This module is aimed at developing media literacy.