

THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
Undergraduate Course Outline 2018-2019

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 order of nature. Moreover, many people mistrust what scientists tell them. This course will explore the philosophical issues raised by the history of science and its place in modern culture. Are there limits to what science can or should explain? Should we place our trust in science? How, if at all, can we, as non-scientists, evaluate scientific claims? This course will explore these issues and their place in modern culture. The course OWL

OBJECTIVES

In this course, students will gain an understanding of how the modern scientific worldview came about. They will learn the basics of scientific methodology and experimental design. They will become familiar with major points of view on the relation between science and religion, and between science and value judgments, and gain an appreciation for the place of science within our culture. In addition, they will become familiar with the basics of some contemporary scientific controversies. Most importantly, students will develop skills needed to distinguish scientific claims that are well-supported by evidence from those that are not.

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 Internet research exercise (due Sep 26) 5%

2 Evaluation of media article (due Oct. 15) 15%

3 a) Experimental proposal (due Nov. 7) 5%

b) Experimental report (due Nov. 28) 15%

x Tests:

Midterm (Oct. 31) 25%

Final (TBA, exam period) 30%

Assignments are to be handed in by 3PM on the due date. If you are unable to hand your assignment directly to the instructor, place it in the Philosophy Department drop box, which is on the first floor of Stevenson Hall. Make sure that your student number and the instructor's name are on your assignment. Late assignments will be penalized 5% per day late.

In conformity with departmental policy all written assignments must be submitted to turnitin.com for plagiarism checking by the due date. Assignments not submitted to turnitin by the due date will be counted as late, and students will not receive credit for written assignments submitted to turnitin.com.

No assignments will be accepted after the last day of classes Dec. 7, 2018.

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http://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf

ACADEMIC OFFENCES

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_offences_undergrad.pdf

PLAGIARISM CHECKING

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted of such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com <http://www.turnitin.com>

SUPPORT SERVICES

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Student Development Centre <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help. Immediate help in the event of a crisis can be had by phoning 519.661.3030 (during class hours) or 519.433.2023 after class hours and on weekends.

Topics

Module I. (3 weeks) Science, media, and PR. This module is aimed at developing media literacy. Students will learn about the process of scientific publication, and develop skills in evaluating media reports about scientific results. We will also take a peek behind the scenes of how results from the laboratory become stories in the media. This will include discussion of the role of PR agencies in shaping what gets reported. We will look at a particularly well-documented case: the role of the tobacco industry in shaping messages about the hazards of tobacco smoke, as well as some more recent campaigns. We will also consider the question of distinguishing reliable from unreliable sources of information on the internet. This module includes exercises aimed at developing skills in finding reliable information in the internet age.

Module II. (4 weeks) Scientific inference and methodology. This module concerns scientific reasoning and the bearing of evidence on scientific claims. The question to be asked is: When you