

Metaphysics and Natural Philosophy (A001513)

Course size *(nominal values; actual values may depend on programme)*

Credits 5.0

Study time 150 h

Course offerings and teaching methods in academic year 2026-2027

A (semester 1)

Dutch

Gent

lecture

Lecturers in academic year 2026-2027

Van Dyck, Maarten

LW01

lecturer-in-charge

Offered in the following programmes in 2026-2027

[Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy](#)

[Elective Set Philosophy and Moral Sciences](#)

crdts

offering

5

A

5

A

Teaching languages

Dutch

Keywords

Metaphysics, Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Heidegger

Position of the course

This introductory course offers a thorough introduction in the views of a number of influential authors who have shaped the tradition of metaphysics.

Contents

Metaphysics is the attempt to give an overarching image of the general structure of the world, and of the place of humans in it. We will discuss a few of the most influential of such attempts, coupled with the lecture of primary texts. The goal is to come to non-canonical readings of canonical authors. We pay attention to both the resulting image and the methods used to construct these images. We will pay special attention to the relation of metaphysics to on the one hand an everyday and on the other hand a scientific (or natural philosophical) perspective on reality. We also consider the relations between the discussed authors and the underlying historical evolutions. In this way, the course thematizes the meaning, possibilities, and limitations of metaphysical thinking.

Authors discussed: Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Kant, Heidegger. Texts read: fragment from The Republic (Plato); fragments from Metaphysics (Aristotle); Méditations Métaphysiques (Descartes).

Initial competences

Sufficient knowledge of the history of philosophy to place the authors discussed.

Final competences

- 1 Being able to comment the primary texts read from the history of metaphysics.
- 2 Having knowledge of a number of crucial basic concepts and arguments from metaphysics.
- 3 Having insight in historical developments within metaphysical thinking.
- 4 Being able to correctly assess the possible views concerning the relation between everyday experience, natural philosophy, and metaphysics.
- 5 Having insight in the specific nature of metaphysics as a discipline.

Conditions for credit contract

Access to this course unit via a credit contract is unrestricted: the student takes into consideration the conditions mentioned in 'Starting Competences'

Conditions for exam contract

Access to this course unit via an exam contract is unrestricted

Teaching methods

Lecture, Independent work

Extra information on the teaching methods

In preparation for the lectures the students read assigned passages from the primary literature.

Study material

Type: Handbook

Name: Meditations on first philosophy

Indicative price: € 35

Optional: no

Available in the Library : Yes

Available through Student Association : Yes

Type: Handbook

Name: The Routledge Guidebook to Descartes Meditations

Indicative price: € 35

Optional: yes

Language : English

Author : Gary Hatfield

Available in the Library : Yes

Available through Student Association : Yes

Type: Syllabus

Name: Cursustekst

Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty

Optional: no

Language : Dutch

Available on Ufora : Yes

Type: Reader

Name: Course texts and compulsory literature

Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty

Optional: no

Available on Ufora : Yes

References

Course content-related study coaching

By appointment with the lecturer.

Assessment moments

end-of-term assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the first examination period

Oral assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the second examination period

Oral assessment

Examination methods in case of permanent assessment

Possibilities of retake in case of permanent assessment

not applicable

Extra information on the examination methods

The examination tests for:

- knowledge of some key concepts and arguments;
- capacity to comment on fragments of the text that have been discussed;
- insight in the main themes being treated;

Calculation of the examination mark

Facilities for Working Students

Facilities:

- 1 Possible exemption from educational activities requiring student attendance
 - 2 Possibility of examination facilities during regular examination periods
 - 3 Feedback can be given during an appointment during and after office hours
- For more information concerning flexible learning: contact the monitoring service of the faculty of Arts and philosophy.