COURSE — Causality (phil 2662/hps 2660)

INSTRUCTOR — Dmitri Gallow (✉: jdmitrigallow@pitt.edu)

SEMINAR TIMES — Wednesdays, 19:00–21:30
Room 1001, Cathedral of Learning

OFFICE HOURS — Mondays and Wednesdays, 12:00–13:00
Room 1009H, Cathedral of Learning

COURSE GOALS — Causal notions appear in nearly every subfield of Philosophy. For a cursory and far from exhaustive list: in Ethics, it is often held that causal responsibility is a necessary condition on moral responsibility. In the Philosophy of Language, so-called causal theories of reference hold that some terms refer to their referents in virtue of causal connections between those referents and the tokenings of those terms. In the Philosophy of Action, prominent theories of intentional action invoke the requirement that an action be caused by the agent's beliefs, desires, and intentions (in a non-deviant way). In the philosophy of science, it is generally accepted that causation plays a central role in scientific explanation; and there is good reason to think that causation is intricately tied up with laws, dispositions, and objective chance (and, thereby, if we accept any chance-credence principle, intimately tied up with rational belief). In Epistemology, there are causal theories of knowledge, causal theories of the 'basing' relation, and causal theories of perceptual content. In rational choice theory, the currently dominant theory—so-called 'causal decision theory'—is formulated in explicitly causal terms. One of the central issues in the Philosophy of Mind concerns the possibility and nature of mental causation. Further examples could be provided. For good or for ill, Philosophy is replete with causal notions. However, with isolated exceptions, much of the discussion of causation in these fields fails to engage with the causation literature in Metaphysics and Philosophy of Science.

The primary goal of this course is to familiarize graduate students with the central metaphysical theories of causation—in particular, regularity theories, probabilistic theories, process theories, counterfactual theories, and manipulationist theories—as well as their prominent shortcomings. In the latter part of the course, we will additionally explore some more general debates about the nature of the causal relation (is it actually a three- or four-place relation? does it depend upon certain *normative* facts?), and the relationship between causation and objective chance.

EVAULATION — Final grades will be determined by 2 components:

Papers	60%
Participation	40%

Papers: You may either submit one long research paper (about 6,000 words) or three short response papers (about 2,000 words). If you choose to submit three short response papers, these papers should be handed in within one week of the seminar in which we discuss the readings you are responding to. (So, for instance, if you write a short response to Mackie's *Causes and Conditions*, then this must be handed in before 1/25.) If you choose to submit one long research paper, then you should meet with me to discuss your ideas before 3/29, and your paper is due before the end of the spring semester.

EVALUATION (CON'T)

PARTICIPATION: It is important that you come to seminar prepared to actively and respectfully participate in the discussion. This means 1) that you should have done all the required readings; 2) that you should contribute to the discussion; and 3) that you should be respectful of your fellow classmates. You should take a look at Chalmer's guidelines for respectful, constructive, and inclusive philosophical discussion to get a more concrete idea of what I mean by treating your classmates respectfully.

The seminar is intended to be an *active* learning environment. I am here to exposit the assigned reading and provide relevant background information, but I (normatively) expect those attending the seminar to arrive with questions and concerns, and be actively engaged throughout the seminar.

SCHEDULE

January 4: No Class (I will be at the Eastern APA)

Syllabus

January 11: Course Intro

optional: Dowe, *Physical Causation*, chapter 1

January 18: Regularity and covering law theories of causation (side topic: what are the causal relata?)

Mackie, *Causes and Conditions*
Davidson, *Causal Relations*
optional: Kim, *Events as Property Exemplifications*

January 25: Probabilistic theories of causation (side topic: singular versus general causal relations)

optional background: Eells, *Probabilistic Causality*, chapter 1
Suppes, *Probabilistic Causation*
optional: Hitchcock, *Probabilistic Causality*, sections 1–2 (SEP entry)

February 1: Probabilistic theories of causation, day 2

Eells, *Probabilistic Causality*, chapters 2 and 6

February 8: Process theories of causation

Salmon, *Scientific Explanation and the Causal Structure of the World*, chapters 5 & 6
optional: Dowe, *Physical Causation*, chapter 5

February 15: Counterfactual theories of causation

optional background: Stalnaker, *A theory of conditionals* and, if time, Lewis, *Counterfactuals*, chapter 1
Lewis, *Causation*, including postscripts

February 22: Counterfactual theories of causation, day 2

Lewis, *Causation as Influence* (2004 version)
optional: Paul and Hall, *Causation: A User's Guide*, chapter 3, sections 1–5.

March 1: Counterfactual Counterfactual theories of causation

Hitchcock, *The Intransivity of Causation Revealed in Equations and Graphs*
optional: Halpern and Pearl, *Causes and explanations: A structural-model approach. (Part I)*

SCHEDULE (CON'T)

March 15: Omissions and Normativity

McGrath, *Causation by Omission: A Dilemma*
Hall, *Structural Equations and Causation*
optional: Hitchcock and Knobe, *Cause and Norm*

March 22: Manipulationist theories of causation

Price and Menzies, *Causation as a Secondary Quality*
optional: Woodward, *Making things Happen*, chapters 2 and 3

March 29: Contrastivism

Hitchcock, *The Role of Contrast in Causal and Explanatory Claims*
Schaffer, *Contrastive Causation*
optional: Schaffer, *Causal Contextualism*.

April 5: 'Mixed' Theories of Causation

Handfield et. al., *The Metaphysics of Causal Models: Where's the Biff?*

April 12: Causation and Chance

Arntzenius, *Reichenbach's Common Cause Principle* (SEP entry)
Cartwright, *Marks and Probabilities: Two Ways to Find Causal Structure*

April 19: Causation and Chance, day 2

Hausman and Woodward, *Independence, Invariance, and the Causal Markov Condition*

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Students in this course will be expected to comply with the University of Pittsburgh's Policy on Academic Integrity. Any student suspected of violating this obligation for any reason during the semester will be required to participate in the procedural process, initiated at the instructor level, as outlined in the University Guidelines on Academic Integrity. This may include, but is not limited to, the confiscation of the examination of any individual suspected of violating University Policy. Furthermore, no student may bring any unauthorized materials to an exam, including dictionaries and programmable calculators.

DISABILITY SERVICES

If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, be sure to contact me within the first two weeks of the semester, as well as Disability Resources and Services (DRS), 140 William Pitt Union, (412) 648-7890, drsrecep@pitt.edu, (412) 228-5347 for P3 ASL users. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.

LAPTOP POLICY

As a general rule, laptops and smart phones are not permitted during class. If you have some good reason for requiring a laptop or a cell phone during class, come speak to me about it in office hours.

RECORDING POLICY

To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussion and/or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student's own private use.

SCHEDULE REVISION

As the course progresses, the course schedule may be revised. If it is, I will notify all enrolled students via email and post an updated syllabus to Courseworks.