

THE NOMOLOGICAL

Jonathan Schaffer and Ted Sider
—and special guest star John Hawthorne
Fall 2018, W 9:50–12:50

Description

This seminar will be on nomological aspects of reality: on various issues about laws and causation, as well as related topics such as counterfactuals, properties, and modality.

Requirements

The primary tasks of a professional researcher center on conferences and journal articles. This class is designed to train you for these tasks. So we will have two seven-week units, each of which begins with four weeks of instructor-led discussion to give you the needed background on the issues, and then culminates in three weeks of student-led presentations which will be structured like APA-style colloquia:

- You will write a paper that is no longer than 3,000 words (excluding footnotes and bibliography).
- You will present that paper to the class in no more than 20 minutes and then field a 30-minute q&a.
- At the end of semester you will expand one of your two 3,000-word papers into a 5,000-word paper.
- Each 3,000-word paper will be worth 15% of your grade, and each presentation will be worth 15% of your grade, for a total of 60% of your grade. Your 5,000-word paper will be worth the remaining 40% of your grade. We reserve the right to adjust grades upwards (but not downwards) as we see fit.

Readings

Readings will be available on the Sakai site for the course (<https://sakai.rutgers.edu/x/gmhiWE>). (In addition to the course readings, we highly recommend Bennett and Gorovitz's "Improving Academic Writing".)

Tentative schedule

CAUSATION

- 9/5 Counterfactual theories (Schaffer)
- 9/12 Counterfactuals (Hawthorne)
- 9/19 Process theories (Schaffer)
- 9/26 Interventionist theories (Schaffer)
- 10/3 Presentations
- 10/10 Presentations
- 10/17 Presentations

LAWS

- 10/24 Reductionist theories (Sider)
- 10/31 Combinatorialism (Hawthorne)
- 11/7 Best-system laws and probabilities without Humean Supervenience (Barry Loewer)
- 11/14 Laws and properties (Sider)
- 11/28 Presentations
- 12/5 Presentations
- 12/12 Presentations