

# Metaphysics: grounding and causation

Dr. Jacob Archambault

## Course description

This course provides an introduction to metaphysics via a sustained examination of the topics of grounding and causation. Throughout the course, we will read a wide variety of figures from divergent traditions and historical periods, from Aristotle to today. By the end of the course, the student shall have achieved: i) familiarity with the debates surrounding these concepts, ii) an understanding of how these notions have changed over time, and iii) insight into how they operate in the structures and thinking governing modern life and culture.

## Course requirements

**Short paper (midterm)** – Fewer than 3000 words, footnotes and bibliography included.

**Medium-length paper (final)** – Fewer than 5000 words.

## Texts

All texts will be provided.

## Syllabus

### Part 1: causes

Week of:	Monday	Thursday
Week 1	Thomas Aquinas, <i>Sententia Libri Metaphysicae</i> , prologue.	Aristotle, <i>Metaphysics α</i> , 993a 30-994b 11.
Week 2	Aristotle, <i>Metaphysics α</i> 994a 11-994b 31.	Aristotle, <i>Metaphysics α</i> 994b 32-995a 20.
Week 3	John Duns Scotus, <i>A Treatise on God as First Principle</i> , sect. 1.	John Duns Scotus, <i>A Treatise on God as First Principle</i> , sect. 2.
Week 4	John Duns Scotus, <i>A Treatise on God as First Principle</i> , sect. 3.	John Duns Scotus, <i>A Treatise on God as First Principle</i> , sect. 4.
Week 5	Nicolas Malebranche, <i>Dialogues on Metaphysics and Religion</i> , Dial. 8.	David Hume, <i>An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding</i> , sec. 7.1.
Week 6	David Hume, <i>An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding</i> , sec. 7.2.	Russell, Bertrand. (1912-13). On the Notion of Cause.
Week 7	Mackie, J. L. (1965). Causes and Conditions, sec. 1-2.	Mackie, J. L. (1965). Causes and Conditions, sec. 3-4.
Week 8	Mackie, J. L. (1965). Causes and Conditions, sec. 5.	Mackie, J. L. (1965). Causes and Conditions, sec. 6-9.
Week 9	Gilson, Etienne (1952/83). Principles and Causes.	Anscombe, G. E. M. (1993). Causality and Determination.

### Part 2: grounding

Week 10	Heidegger, Martin (1929). On the Essence of Ground, Sec. 1	Heidegger, Martin (1929). On the Essence of Ground, Sec. 2.
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Week 11	Heidegger, Martin (1929). On the Essence of Ground, Sec. 3	Schaffer, Jonathan (2016). Grounding in the image of causation, sec. 1
Week 12	Schaffer, Jonathan (2016). Grounding in the image of causation, sec. 2-3.	Schaffer, Jonathan (2016). Grounding in the image of causation, sec. 4.
Week 13	Koslicki, Kathrin (2016). Where grounding and causation part ways: comments on Schaffer.	Semester wrap-up.