Department of Philosophy
PHL 3060: Philosophy and the Sciences
Semester I, 2025-26

I. General Information

Meetings:	M: 3:00pm-5:45pm Room: SMEE 100
Professor:	Rob Thompson Office: Smee Hall 207 Phone: 849-2930 Office Hours: MWF: 12:15-1:15; or by appointment E-mail: robertthompson@pointloma.edu
Texts:	The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, 4e (50th anniversary) Thomas Kuhn The Scientific Background to Modern Philosophy, Michael R. Matthews (ed.) Worldviews: An Introduction to the History and Philosophy of Science, 3e Richard DeWitt PDF handouts

II. Course Description

A philosophical and historical examination of the nature and epistemological foundations of science, scientific method, and the relationship between science and such areas as religion, morality, and culture.

III. Course Learning Outcomes

1. Students will engage in the disciplined practice of asking questions about God, the world, and of themselves, including questions for which there may be no easy answers, especially related to science and how it interfaces with philosophy, religion, and ethics.
2. Students will differentiate among interrelated movements or figures in the history of philosophy, specifically concerning shifts in cosmology, physics, and scientific method.
3. Students will evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of human reasoning or experience to provide an adequate account of the human condition, the world, ethics and Christian life, especially in conversation with philosophical notions and movements concerning nature and scientific investigation.

IV. Course Requirements and Grading

5% **Attendance and Participation:** Attend *every* class session. No make-ups will be allowed for any required work unless the cause of the absence is one of the following: illness, religious observance, travel due to a sanctioned university event (e.g., team sports, musical presentation—be sure to see me to get such an absence cleared *before* missing the class). The student will be responsible for the content of any missed class. Moreover, significant tardiness will count as an absence. In addition, a warm body is a minimal requirement and is not sufficient. Thus, class participation is a critical component of the course.

Per the University's attendance policy, any student who misses more than 20% of the course may be de-enrolled without appeal. In addition to no credit being gained for the course, the student may receive a failing grade on his or her transcript if de-enrollment occurs after the last day to drop a semester class. As with any course requirement, each student bears the responsibility to ensure that the attendance requirement is met.

20% **Readings:** Read *all* of the assigned material *before* coming to class. During roll call at the beginning of each class, students will be asked to give a number between 0 and 10 (10 being highest) indicating how much of the assigned reading was carefully and thoughtfully read. The number given will be the grade that the student receives for the day. For example, if you have read carefully and thoughtfully 85% of the reading for a given day, you should represent, and will receive, an 8.5 for the day. Since this is an extended seminar course, one grade will be dropped.

10% **Journal:** We will begin each class with a written response to a prompt drawn from the reading for that day. These "journal entries" will be handwritten and will be kept in a separate document by the student, e.g., a separate booklet, and will be collected occasionally. Responses will also be shared with peers for their critical engagement at the start of class. Peers should sign their written comments each time. The purpose of these journals is to begin our time together each week with a written reflection on the reading and how it impacted us. The hope is that this time will help us prepare for collective engagement over the reading.

15% **Presentation:** Each student will do one in-class presentation. The presenter should include a brief introduction to the figure(s) covered during that session. (The brief introduction should include material not already covered by prior presenters.) The presentation should *mainly* be an outline of the text(s) for the day and should reference significant textual portions (quotations or specific page/text references) highlighting the key ideas to be covered in class. The person presenting should have in mind teaching the material and facilitating discussion at a seminar level and for the time allotted for the material. Students must provide an outline and bibliography for each member of the class and should provide a complete copy of her presentation outline and notes to me prior to the start of class. Please refrain from using electronic sources unless these are full text journals accessed through our library's numerous database collections. We will select presentation dates at our first meeting. (NB: the

goal is both to move through the salient elements of the reading for the day and to engage in critical discussion on the reading, so the presentations should reflect an effort to accomplish both elements.)

20% **Short Research Papers:** Each student will do 4 short research papers. Each paper will address a question posed in class or via email and will be due at the beginning of the following class period. Each paper is to be no less than 2 full pages (typed) and no more than 3 full pages, should evidence research sufficient to carefully and thoroughly respond to the question posed, and should evidence the level of careful revision appropriate for upper division, academic research and writing. MLA or some other coherent style is required, as is the use of inclusive language. Given the nature of the assignment, no late work will be accepted. (Caveat: up to 5 students can select to do a second presentation in lieu of 2 of the SRPs. The additional presentation grade will replace the grade for the 2 missing SRPs. If more than 5 students wish to utilize this option, an equitable way to reduce the number to 5 will be employed.) Each paper is worth 5 points.

SRP Rubric:

5: Paper clearly evidences adequate research; excellent writing, including an elegance of syntax that admits of no grammatical or typographical errors and semantics that carries meaning in an aesthetic, as well as pragmatic, fashion; and an excellence in probity of analysis in response to the prompt.

4: Paper clearly evidences adequate research; strong writing, including care with both syntax and semantics such that there are few grammatical or typographical errors and the style is good; a clear attempt at a thorough response to the prompt.

3: Paper includes research; evidences numerous syntactical errors with little concern for style; an attempt to respond to prompt.

2: Paper includes little or no research; little or no effort to revise for syntactical or semantical purpose; response to prompt is inadequate.

1: Paper includes no obvious research; an abundance of syntactical/semantical errors; a woefully inadequate response to the prompt.

0: Paper is incomplete or not timely.

30% **Term Paper:** Each student will write a major term paper. Term paper topics will be selected in consultation with the professor. The paper itself must evidence a level of research consistent with the subject matter and the level of the course, should engage primary source texts where appropriate, and should evidence research of the secondary source literature. The rubric for the SRP will serve as the rubric for the Term Paper, as well. The paper is due Monday, 12/15, by 3pm PST in my mailbox in hardcopy form and should be no less than 10 pages (3000 words).

Late work: All assignments are due at the *beginning* of class on the date they are

due. No late work will be accepted.

V. Miscellany

1. *Academic Misconduct Policy*: Academic misconduct includes plagiarism and the use of unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any exam or other academic exercise. It also includes assisting others in any attempt to cheat. It will not be tolerated. However, respect for academic honesty is consistent with discussing the ideas of the course with others. In fact, I encourage you to discuss any and all of the course material that you find interesting outside of class. In the end, however, you must do your written work on your own. If you have any questions about academic honesty, either in general or in particular, please ask me.

A special note on *plagiarism* is warranted. Each student is responsible to know what plagiarism is and to avoid even the appearance of plagiarism in his or her work. No act of plagiarism, whether born of one's intention or ignorance, will be tolerated in this class. Any student caught plagiarizing will incur severe academic punishment. Such punishment will include a grade of zero for the plagiarized work, and may also include expulsion with a failing grade from the course. The student's name and an explanation of the incident will also be forwarded to the Provost of the University. Please see the University policy stated in the catalogue.

2. *Discrimination/Harassment Policy*: Discrimination or harassment related to race, gender, ethnicity, sexual identity or orientation, differences in ability, religious choice, or any other type of behavior that dehumanizes human beings or dismisses difference, is not conducive to a good learning environment and is harmful to human vitality and healthy community. These behaviors will not be tolerated. I encourage all students to be open to any honest, respectful, and tactful discussion of issues that might arise in the context of our learning.

3. *Academic Accommodations Policy*: While all students are expected to meet the minimum standards for completion of this course as established by the instructor, students with disabilities may require academic adjustments, modifications or auxiliary aids/services. At Point Loma Nazarene University (PLNU), these students are requested to register with the Disability Resource Center (DRC), located in the Bond Academic Center. (DRC@pointloma.edu or 619-849-2486). The DRC's policies and procedures for assisting such students in the development of an appropriate academic adjustment plan (AP) allows PLNU to comply with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act. Section 504 (a) prohibits discrimination against students with special needs and guarantees all qualified students equal access to and benefits of PLNU programs and activities. After the student files the required documentation, the DRC, in conjunction with the student, will develop an AP to meet that student's specific learning needs. The DRC will thereafter email the student's AP to all faculty who teach courses in which the student is enrolled each semester. The AP must be implemented in all such courses.

If students do not wish to avail themselves of some or all of the elements of their AP in a particular course, it is the responsibility of those students to notify their professor in that course. PLNU highly recommends that DRC students speak with their professors during the first two weeks of each semester about the applicability of their AP in that particular course and/or if they do not desire to take advantage of some or all of the elements of their AP in that course.

4. *Inclusive Language Policy*: The use of inclusive language is now prevalent, even expected, throughout most sectors of our society (e.g., academia, government, business, religious organizations). Further, inclusive language is very often a more accurate and fair representation of the intended meaning of a person's communicative content. As such, everyone is expected to make use of inclusive language in all written work. The avoidance of such use in a given project will result in a lowering of the grade for that project. In addition, everyone is expected to make use of inclusive language during classroom discussions.

5. *Copyright Policy*: Point Loma Nazarene University, as a non-profit educational institution, is entitled by law to use materials protected by the US Copyright Act for classroom education. Any use of those materials outside the class may violate the law.