

## PHIL4340: METAPHYSICS

Tu/Th 9:30-10:50

ENG/PHIL 163

### Instructor

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Office hours: MWF 9:00-10:00

### Course Description

This course will be devoted to topics in one of the core areas of metaphysics: *ontology*—the study of what there *is*. We will consider in depth a number of the central issues in the field, including the aims and limits of the field, what sorts of things we are committed to believing in, the nature of material substances, the relationship between a thing and its properties, what sorts of things *we* are, the nature of events, and the complex problem of universals.

### Required Texts

- Cynthia Macdonald, *Varieties of Things: Foundations of Contemporary Metaphysics* (2005: Wiley-Blackwell; ISBN: 0-631-18695-6)
- Cynthia Macdonald and Stephen Laurence (eds.), *Contemporary Readings in the Foundations of Metaphysics* (1998: Wiley-Blackwell; ISBN: 978-0631201724)

(Additional readings will be available as handouts in class or in PDF format on my website, [www.tytoken.com](http://www.tytoken.com).)

### Course Requirements

Your final grade will depend on the percentage you earn of the total points possible in the class: A+: 97-100; A: 94-96; A-: 90-93; B+: 87-89; B: 84-86; B-: 80-83; C+: 77-79; C: 74-76; C-: 70-73; D+: 67-69; D: 64-66; D-: 60-63.

### Papers

You will have to write three 6-to-8-page “response” papers during the course of this term, and one longer research paper. There are no exams in this course.

#### Response Papers

Each response paper must be written on one of the major topics of the course, except for the first topic: “Doing Stuff with Stuff”; “Physical Stuff”; “Personal Identity”; “Events”; “Universals”. No more than one paper may be written any major topic. You may write a paper responding to some particular philosophical reading, comparing two or more views, or on some other relevant topic. Papers are due within one week of the major topic being covered in class. Papers on the topic of “Universals” are due on Tues., Dec. 10:

- “Doing Stuff with Stuff”: Papers due on or before Thurs., Sept. 26.
- “Physical Stuff”: Papers due on or before Thurs., Oct. 10.
- “Personal Identity”: Papers due on or before Tues., Oct. 29.
- “Events”: Papers due on or before Tues., Nov. 19.
- “Universals”: Papers due on or before Tues., Dec. 10.

Each response paper is worth 15% of your final grade. (I *strongly* recommend that you not put off writing your papers until the last three topics.)

Assignments submitted late without explicit extensions or authorized excuses will receive a penalty of one letter grade (10%) per day late.

### Research Paper

Your research paper is worth 40% of your grade, and will be on a topic of your choosing, focusing on one or more of the major topics covered in the term. The paper should be 12-to-15 pages in length. This paper is due on Tuesday, December 10, and will not be returned to you. I strongly suggest you schedule a meeting with me to discuss the topic of your paper well in advance of the due date. Research papers will not be accepted late *for any reason*.

*Papers will not be accepted via e-mail or fax.*

### **Participation**

The remaining 15% of your grade will be your participation grade. Participation includes doing the assigned readings *before* the class in which the reading shall be discussed, taking active part in class discussion, and putting serious effort into your papers. Participation also includes attendance. For every class you miss without authorized excuse, your participation grade will be deducted 1 point (that is, 1% of your final grade, up to the 10% encompassed by the participation grade). See also “Classroom Courtesy” below.

### **Special Accommodations**

- Students with disabilities that require special class or exam accommodations must present a form from AccessTECH Disability Support Program specifying the details during the first week of classes. Their offices are located in 335 West Hall. See [www.accesstech.dsa.ttu.edu](http://www.accesstech.dsa.ttu.edu).
- You will not be penalized for any absences due to religious observances. However, it is your responsibility to inform me in advance of any intended absences for religious observance *as soon as possible* so that we can make other arrangements. As well, it remains your responsibility to have read the material assigned for that day and to obtain any notes from one of your classmates for classes missed.

### **Classroom Courtesy**

Please be courteous to your fellow students and avoid unnecessary disruptions. Arrive on time, leave on time, and *turn off your cell phone during class*. Note that if your cell phone rings during class, *I will answer it*. Laptops are permitted in class, but please do not abuse this privilege. Text-messaging is *not* permitted during my class. If I see you text-messaging during class-time, your participation grade will be deducted 1 point. This is your only warning.

### **Academic Integrity and Irresponsibility**

I take incidents of academic misconduct *very seriously*. These include but are not restricted to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, and fabrication. Penalties are dependent on the nature of the misconduct, and may involve disciplinary proceedings with the Student Judicial Programs. Knowing what constitutes academic misconduct is *your responsibility*. If you have a concern about what constitutes academic dishonesty *prior to turning in an assignment*, please see me, and I will be happy to help you. For more information, see <http://www.depts.ttu.edu/studentjudicialprograms/academicinteg.php>.

### **The Writing Center**

Particularly for new philosophy students, I strongly recommend that you work on your paper with a writing tutor. The Writing Center offers *free assistance* in room 175 of the Philosophy and English Building. See <http://english.ttu.edu/uwc01>.

## Course Schedule

(Note: Schedule is subject to change.)

Readings listed below should be read *before* class.

*VT* = *Varieties of Things*

*CM* = *Contemporary Readings in the Foundations of Metaphysics*

Topic	Date	Readings
Let's Get Metaphysical	(Tu) Aug 27	<i>No Readings</i>
	(Th) Aug 29	Van Inwagen, "The Nature of Metaphysics" ( <i>CM</i> Ch. 1)
	(Tu) Sept 3	Haack, "Descriptive and Revisionary Metaphysics" ( <i>CM</i> Ch. 2)
	(Th) Sept 5	<i>VT</i> Ch. 1: "The Nature and Function of Metaphysics" ( <i>VT</i> , pp. 3-30)
Doing Stuff with Stuff	(Tu) Sept 10	Quine, "On What There Is" ( <i>CM</i> , Ch. 3)
	(Th) Sept 12	Alston, "Ontological Commitments" ( <i>CM</i> , Ch. 4)
	(Tu) Sept 17	<i>VT</i> Ch. 2: "Some Tools of Metaphysics" (pp. 36-56)
	(Th) Sept 19	<i>VT</i> Ch. 2: "Some Tools of Metaphysics" (pp. 56-70)
Physical Stuff	(Tu) Sept 24	Loux, "Beyond Substrata and Bundles" ( <i>CM</i> , Ch. 16)
	(Th) Sept 26	Van Cleve, "Three Versions of the Bundle Theory" ( <i>CM</i> , Ch. 20)
	(Tu) Oct 1	<i>VT</i> Ch. 3: "Material Substances" (pp. 79-102)
	(Th) Oct 3	<i>VT</i> Ch. 3: "Material Substances" (pp. 102-122)
Personal Identity	(Tu) Oct 8	Perry, "A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality" (handout)
	(Th) Oct 10	Williams, "Personal Identity and Individuation" (handout)
	(Tu) Oct 15	<i>VT</i> Ch. 4: "Persons and Personal Identity" (pp. 135-155)
	(Th) Oct 17	Parfit, "Personal Identity" (handout)
	(Tu) Oct 22	<i>VT</i> Ch. 4: "Persons and Personal Identity" (pp. 155-174)
Events	(Th) Oct 24	Davidson, "The Individuation of Events" ( <i>CM</i> , Ch. 22)
	(Tu) Oct 29	Kim, "Events as Property Exemplifications" ( <i>CM</i> , Ch. 23)
	(Th) Oct 31	<i>No Class</i>
	(Tu) Nov 5	Lombard, "Ontologies of Events" ( <i>CM</i> , Ch. 21)
	(Th) Nov 7	<i>VT</i> Ch. 5: "Events" (pp. 181-193)
	(Tu) Nov 12	<i>VT</i> Ch. 5: "Events" (pp. 193-208)
Universals	(Th) Nov 14	Campbell, "The Metaphysic of Abstract Particulars" ( <i>CM</i> , Ch. 25)
	(Tu) Nov 19	Simons, "Particulars in Particular Clothing" ( <i>CM</i> , Ch. 26)
	(Th) Nov 21	<i>VT</i> Ch. 6: "Universals and the Realism/Nominalism Debate" (pp. 219-236)
	(Tu) Nov 26	Lewis, "New Work for a Theory of Universals" ( <i>CM</i> , Ch. 13)
	(Th) Nov 28	<i>No Class</i>
	(Tu) Dec 3	<i>VT</i> Ch. 6: "Universals and the Realism/Nominalism Debate" (pp. 236-252)