

PHIL4340: METAPHYSICS
TR 12:30-1:50, Eng/Phil 164

Instructor

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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 what sorts of things we are committed to believing in, what possibilities *actually* amount to, whether properties are real things in the world that exist apart from their instances, what sorts of things *we* are, and how we should think of the ontology of *art*. The course will center around close readings of contemporary works in metaphysics.

Core Text

- Cynthia Macdonald and Stephen Laurence (eds.), *Contemporary Readings in the Foundations of Metaphysics* (1998: Wiley-Blackwell; ISBN: 978-0631201724)

(Additional readings will be available in PDF format on my website, www.tytoken.com. These are indicated under the course schedule below as “[WEB].”)

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 5-to-7-page “response” papers during the course of this term, and one longer research paper.

Response Papers

Each response paper must be written on one of the major topics of the course (“Ontological Commitment”; “Possible Worlds and Possibilities”; “Universals”; “Tropes”; “Personal Identity”). No more than one paper may be written on any major topic, and you cannot turn in a paper on “Ontology and Art”. 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:

- “Ontological Commitment”: Papers due on or before Thurs., Sept 16.
- “Possible Worlds and Possibilities”: Papers due on or before Thur, Sept 30.
- “Universals”: Papers due on or before Thurs., Oct 21.
- “Tropes”: Papers due on or before Thurs., Nov. 11.
- “Personal Identity”: Papers due on or before Tues, Nov. 23.

Each response paper is worth 10% of your final grade. (I *strongly* recommend that you not put off writing your papers until the last three topics. Each paper is worth 10% of your final grade.)

Research Paper

Your research paper is worth 20% 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. This paper is due on the last day of class, 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.

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

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

Exam

There will be two in-class examinations for the course, each worth 20% of your final grade.

Participation

The final 10% of your grade is 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

- Any student who, because of a disability, may require special arrangements in order to meet the course requirements should contact the instructor as soon as possible to make any necessary arrangements. Students should present appropriate verification from Student Disability Services during the instructor’s office hours. Please note instructors are not allowed to provide classroom accommodations to a student until appropriate verification from Student Disability Services has been provided. For additional information, you may contact the Student Disability Services office in 335 West Hall or 806-742-2405.
- 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>.

Course Schedule

Topic	Date	Readings
<i>Introduction</i>	Thur, Aug 26	<i>No readings</i>
<i>Ontological Commitment</i>	Tues, Aug 31	Peter van Inwagen, "The Nature of Metaphysics"
	Thur, Sept 2	Susan Haack, "Descriptive and Revisionary Metaphysics"
	Tues, Sept 7	W.V.O. Quine, "On What There Is"
	Thur, Sept 9	William P. Alston, "Ontological Commitments"
<i>Possible Worlds & Possibilities</i>	Tues, Sept 14	David Lewis, "Possible Worlds"
	Thur, Sept 16	Robert Stalnaker, "Possible Worlds"
	Tues, Sept 21	Peter Forrest, "Ways Worlds Could Be"
	Thur, Sept 23	David Lewis, "Truth in Fiction" [WEB]
<i>Properties & Universals</i>	Tues, Sept 28	Hilary Putnam, "On Properties"
	Thur, Sept 30	David Lewis, "New Work for a Theory of Universals"
	Tues, Oct 5	David Lewis, "Against Structural Universals"
	Thur, Oct 7	John Bigelow and Robert Pargetter, "A Theory of Structural Universals"
	Tue, Oct 12	<i>No Class</i>
	Thur, Oct 14	Midterm Exam Review
	Tues, Oct 19	Midterm Exam
<i>Tropes</i>	Thur, Oct 21	Cynthia Macdonald, "Tropes and Other Things"
	Tues, Oct 26	<i>No Class</i>
	Thur, Oct 28	<i>No Class</i>
	Tues, Nov 2	Keith Campbell, "The Metaphysic of Abstract Particulars"
	Thur, Nov 4	Peter Simons, "Particulars in Particular Clothing: Three Trope Theories of Substance"
<i>Personal Identity</i>	Tues, Nov 9	John Perry, "A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality" [WEB]
	Thur, Nov 11	Bernard Williams, "The Self and the Future" [WEB]
	Tues, Nov 16	Derek Parfit, "Personal Identity" [WEB]
<i>Ontology and Art</i>	Thur, Nov 18	Amie Thomasson, "The Ontology of Art and Knowledge in Aesthetics" [WEB]
	Tues, Nov 23	Richard Wollheim, Selection from <i>Art and Its Objects</i> [WEB]
	Thur, Nov 25	<i>No Class</i>
	Tues, Nov 30	Nicholas Wolterstorff, "Toward an Ontology of Art Works" [WEB]
	Thur, Dec 2	Jerrold Levinson, "What a Musical Work Is" [WEB]
	Tues, Dec 7	Final Exam Review
	Friday, Dec 10	Final Examination