

PHIL355: METAPHYSICS

Spring 2013
Tu/Th 12:35-2:15
Bogar 107

Instructor

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Office hours: MWF 10:00-11:00 and by appointment

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.)

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 Thurs., May 2:

- “Doing Stuff with Stuff”: Papers due on or before Thurs., Feb. 14.
- “Physical Stuff”: Papers due on or before Thurs., Feb. 28 (by e-mail)
- “Personal Identity”: Papers due on or before Thurs., Mar. 28.
- “Events”: Papers due on or before Tues., Apr. 16.
- “Universals”: Papers due on or before Thurs., May 2.

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 35% 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 Mon., May 6, 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 (except in cases noted above)

Participation

Given the size of this class, I will be running it as a seminar, and so 20% 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 20% encompassed by the participation grade). See also “Classroom Courtesy” below.

Special Accommodations

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the university makes efforts to provide reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. To be considered for disability accommodations, the student should forward recent documentation of the disability to the director of the counseling center. Full information about the required documentation and steps for obtaining accommodations is discussed in the disabilities policy available at www.susqu.edu/counseling/disabilities.htm.

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 incidences of academic dishonesty *very* seriously. Plagiarism or cheating of any kind will not be tolerated and will result in failing the class. Any instances of academic dishonesty will be reported to the university judicial board. It is your responsibility to read and abide by the university’s policy on plagiarism (<http://www.susqu.edu/studentlife/16594.asp>).

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	Reading
<i>Let's Get Metaphysical</i>	Tu/Jan 15	<i>No Readings</i>
	Th/Jan17	Van Inwagen, “The Nature of Metaphysics” (<i>CM</i> Ch. 1)
	Tu/Jan 22	Haack, “Descriptive and Revisionary Metaphysics” (<i>CM</i> Ch. 2)

	Th/Jan 24	<i>VT</i> Ch. 1: “The Nature and Function of Metaphysics” (<i>VT</i> , pp. 3-30)
<i>Doing Stuff with Stuff</i>	Tu/Jan 29	Quine, “On What There Is” (<i>CM</i> , Ch. 3)
	Th/Jan 31	Alston, “Ontological Commitments” (<i>CM</i> , Ch. 4)
	Tu/Feb 5	<i>VT</i> Ch. 2: “Some Tools of Metaphysics” (pp. 36-56)
	Th/Feb 7	<i>VT</i> Ch. 2: “Some Tools of Metaphysics” (pp. 56-70)
<i>Physical Stuff</i>	Tu/Feb 12	Loux, “Beyond Substrata and Bundles” (<i>CM</i> , Ch. 16)
	Th/Feb 14	Van Cleve, “Three Versions of the Bundle Theory” (<i>CM</i> , Ch. 20)
	Tu/Feb 19	<i>VT</i> Ch. 3: “Material Substances” (pp. 79-102)
	Th/Feb 21	<i>VT</i> Ch. 3: “Material Substances” (pp. 102-122)
<i>Personal Identity</i>	Tu/Feb 26	Perry, “A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality” (handout)
	Th/Feb 28	<i>Class Cancelled</i>
	Tu/Mar 5	<i>No Classes</i>
	Th/Mar 7	<i>No Classes</i>
	Tu/Mar 12	Williams, “Personal Identity and Individuation” (handout)
	Th/Mar 14	<i>VT</i> Ch. 5: “Persons and Personal Identity” (pp. 135-155)
	Tu/Mar 19	Parfit, “Personal Identity” (handout)
	Th/Mar 21	<i>VT</i> Ch. 4: “Persons and Personal Identity” (pp. 155-174)
<i>Events</i>	Tu/Mar 26	Davidson, “The Individuation of Events” (<i>CM</i> , Ch. 22)
	Th/Mar 28	Kim, “Events as Property Exemplifications” (<i>CM</i> , Ch. 23)
	Tu/Apr 2	Lombard, “Ontologies of Events” (<i>CM</i> , Ch. 21)
	Th/Apr 4	<i>VT</i> Ch. 5: “Events” (pp. 181-193)
	Tu/Apr 9	<i>VT</i> Ch. 5: “Events” (pp. 193-208)
<i>Universals</i>	Th/Apr 11	Campbell, “The Metaphysic of Abstract Particulars” (<i>CM</i> , Ch. 25)
	Tu/Apr 16	Simons, “Particulars in Particular Clothing” (<i>CM</i> , Ch. 26)
	Th/Apr 18	<i>VT</i> Ch. 6: “Universals and the Realism/Nominalism Debate” (pp. 219-236)
	Tu/Apr 23	Lewis, “New Work for a Theory of Universals” (<i>CM</i> , Ch. 13)
	Th/Apr 25	<i>VT</i> Ch. 6: “Universals and the Realism/Nominalism Debate” (pp. 236-252)