PHIL 181: Metaphysics  
Section 01: MWF 11:00-11:50  
Mendocino (MND) 3009

Instructor:  Prof. Thomas F. Pyne

Office Hours:  M 3:00-4:00, T 1:00-2:00; other times by appointment.  
In addition I will conduct ‘virtual’ office hours via SacCT ‘Discussions’.

Office Location:  Mendocino 3000

Phone:  (Office) 278-7288  
(Philosophy Department) 278-6424

Email:  pynetf@csus.edu  
Faculty Website:  http://www.csus.edu/indiv/p/pynetf/

Required Text:  
[1]  Peter Van Inwagen & Dean W. Zimmerman, editors.  

SacCT:  https://online.csus.edu

Course Description

Examines argument concerning the nature of reality. Representative topics include: substance, space, time, God, free will, determinism, identity, universals. Emphasis is on contemporary formulations. Prerequisite: 6 units in philosophy or instructor permission. Units: 3.0.

Course Objectives

- The course is designed to give a systematic introduction to philosophical problems that are metaphysical; to show what distinguishes metaphysical problems from other philosophical problems.
- We will then investigate a restricted sampling of metaphysical problems which are under active investigation in the present.
- This investigation will involve study of solutions by contemporary philosophers.
- Finally, the course will require some metaphysical investigation by the student, as well as some writing.

Students will be expected to:
- Demonstrate a developed ability to read and understand contemporary philosophical texts.
- Evaluate critically the concepts and arguments contained in the texts;
– Write argumentative papers applying philosophical concepts and reasoning to issues in
metaphysics;
– Students will demonstrate their achievement of the course objectives and expectations
through:
  – Reading comprehension quizzes on each reading assignment;
  – Exams which test for a deeper understanding of metaphysical issues, as well as of the
    arguments for or against the different sides; students will show their understanding via essay
    answers;
  – Participation in in-class and online discussion;
  – Composition of argumentative papers on assigned topics in metaphysics.
– PHIL 181: Metaphysics is the department-designated class for information competency
assessments of Philosophy majors. Thus the assignments will be designed to assess your
ability to use information resources like the library resources, databases, reference works, etc.

Course Delivery

While PHIL 181 will be in most ways a standard lecture/discussion class, it will be ‘web-assisted.’
That is, we will be using some features of the SacCT course management system.
SacCT is a program designed for on-line college courses. Among other things, it serves as a location
for course material, lecture notes, tests, papers, and discussions.
I will make important course content available, including lecture notes and other supplementary
material.
You will be taking quizzes and exams, participating in discussions, and submitting papers through
SacCT. In addition, you may communicate with me, as well as with other students in the class,
through the SacCT Mail facility.

Access the Course

You will use your Saclink account to log into the course from the SacCT Login page
(https://online.csus.edu).

If you do not have a Saclink account yet, please refer to the Setting Up a Saclink Account webpage
(http://www.csus.edu/saclink/settingUp.stm) to create a saclink account online.

To get started using SacCT, visit the Student Resources webpage
(http://www.csus.edu/webct/student/) where you can access Online Tutorials, Frequently Asked
Questions, and other help resources.

Communications

The course will use the communication tools built into SacCT:
  – Announcements: It's a good idea to check for announcements from time to time during the
    semester
  – Mail: You may send me (or a classmate) a message via the 'Mail' function. I will respond
    promptly. (I can't vouch for the classmate.)
  – Discussions: You will be expected to participate in discussions, whether in class or through
    the 'Discussions' function in SacCT.
Calendar: Exams and due dates for papers will all appear in the Calendar.

Technical Requirements

To access a course in SacCT you will need access to the Internet and an internet browser (Internet Explorer, Firefox, Safari). To ensure that you are using a supported browser and have required plug-ins please run the Check Browser from your SacCT course. Refer to the SacCT Browser Tune-up page for instructions.

For help or to report a problem with SacCT you can:

- Visit the Student SacCT FAQ’s webpage
- Submit a SacCT Problem Form
- Contact the University Help Desk at (916) 278-7337

Work for the Course

1. Quizzes on Reading Assignments (15%)
   You will be responsible for the readings assigned for a particular class day. While you will be responsible for the whole reading, I may indicate in the ‘Course Schedule’ (below) that you should pay particular attention to some part of it. As a result, it may happen that other parts will not be treated in class. You will be responsible for them anyway, and I will respond to questions regarding them.
   The quiz for a given reading assignment must be taken by the beginning of the class period for which it is assigned.
   I will open the window for the reading assignment a week in advance; the window will close at class time.

2. Midterm Exam (15%) Bluebook. A combination of multiple-choice, fill-in, true/false questions, plus some essay questions. The questions will be on the readings, lectures, and discussions up to that point.

3. Final Exam (15%) Bluebook. Same as the midterm. The final will cover all the readings, lectures, and discussions since the midterm.

4. First Paper (4 pages) (15%)
   See ‘Paper Topics’ below.

5. Second Paper (4-7 pages) (15%)
   See ‘Paper Topics’ below.

6. Third Paper (7-10 pages) (15%)
   See ‘Paper Topics’ below.

7. Discussion Contributions (10%)
   You will be expected to make regular contributions to discussion, either in the class period itself or in the online ‘Discussion’ conducted in SacCT.
**Assignment Submission Instructions**

**Papers**

Papers will be submitted in SacCT.

In writing the paper, follow the instructions for argumentative papers found in the “Guidelines for Writing Philosophy Papers” at the Philosophy Department website: [http://www.csus.edu/phil/WritingGuidelines&GradingStandardsforPapers.htm](http://www.csus.edu/phil/WritingGuidelines&GradingStandardsforPapers.htm)

To submit a paper in SacCT:

– Enter SacCT at [https://online.csus.edu](https://online.csus.edu).
– Open the main page for PHIL 181.
– Open ‘Assignments’ (under ‘Course Tools’ on the left margin).
– Open the correct assignment; you will see the text of the assignment itself as well as the due date and time.
– You will see a space for the paper – don’t use that. (Some students, operating on the Belt And Suspenders Principle, paste their paper into that space just in case. That’s fine. But you don’t have to.)
– Click on the ‘Attachment’ button.
– Attach your paper as an editable file that will open in Microsoft Word (not a .pdf or .htm file); if you’re unsure, attach it as a ‘text’ (.txt) or ‘rich text’ (.rtf); those options are available in all word-processing programs.
– Late papers will be lowered a grade increment for every day past the due date. I leave the window open for submitting a paper for five days after its due date. After that the paper will not be accepted.

**Discussions**

– Philosophy involves discussion and argument. It’s the best way to explore philosophical questions, the best way to learn how to philosophize. So I will expect you to participate in the discussions. You will either receive full credit for participation (10%) or no credit, depending on how seriously you take your responsibility to make contributions. If I notice that you are not participating, I will let you know that I expect more.

– To participate in an online discussion:
  o Enter SacCT;
  o Open ‘Discussions’ (under ‘Course Tools’ on the left margin’);
  o Click on one of the topics; you will be able to read the other contributions;
  o You can contribute to the discussion by clicking ‘Create Message’.

**Online Quizzes**

**Reading Quizzes:** There will be a reading quiz on every assignment. A reading quiz will consist of five to ten multiple-choice questions designed so that a careful reader should be able to
answer them. The quiz will ‘open’ a week before it is due; it will ‘close’ at the beginning of the first class period in which the reading will be discussed.

To take a reading quiz in SacCT:

Enter SacCT at https://online.csus.edu;
– Open the main page for PHIL 181;
– Open ‘Assessments’ (under ‘Course Tools’ on the left margin of the main page);
– Answer the questions (make sure you ‘submit’ each question as well as the entire exam).

You will have only one chance to take the quiz, so check your answers before submitting.

**Exams:** Exam 1 and the Final Exam will be taken in-class.

**Grading**

**Exams:** Exams will receive numerical grades; your score will be ‘out of’ 100.

**Papers:** Papers will receive letter grades. To determine your final grade, I will convert those letter grades into the highest number in the grade range under ‘Grading Criteria’ below. (For example, a B grade on a paper converts to 89.)

**Reading Quizzes:** Reading quizzes will receive a grade of 2 (full credit), 1 (inadequate comprehension), or 0 (not taken). An average of 1.7 or above will receive full credit (100). Lower scores will be prorated.

**Discussion:** Discussion participation will receive either complete credit (100) or none (0). Periodically, I will post progress reports on your participation in the Gradebook. These progress reports are indications of what you would get at the end of the semester if you continue your present course. That grade does not ‘count’; it’s just information.

**Final Grade:** The final grade for the course will be determined by the weighted sum of the exams, quizzes, discussion, and papers.

**Grading Criteria**

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<tr>
<th>Scaled Score</th>
<th>Letter Equivalent</th>
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<td>100-94</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>93-92</td>
<td>A-</td>
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<td>91-90</td>
<td>B+</td>
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<td>89-84</td>
<td>B</td>
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<td>83-82</td>
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<td>81-80</td>
<td>C+</td>
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<td>79-74</td>
<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>73-72</td>
<td>C-</td>
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<tr>
<td>71-70</td>
<td>D+</td>
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Viewing Grades in SacCT

For reading quizzes you will be able to see your score as soon as you have submitted your quiz. For exams, and papers I will post the grades as soon as I have finished grading them. You can see your grades during the semester by going to ‘MyGrades’ in SacCT.

Course Policies

Attendance

I expect attendance at every class meeting. If for some excellent reason you cannot make class, let me know – preferably in advance. If this is impossible, let me know by 5:00 on the day you miss, preferably by an e-mail message within SacCT. I will lower you a grade increment for every absence in which you fail to contact me the same day.

Class meetings will begin at 11:00 am with a roll. Be on time. Anticipate. Excuses don’t cut it: I will treat a pattern of late arrival as an unexcused absence.

I expect attention to the material during class periods. If there is a class discussion, I will serve as moderator; please wait to be recognized before making a contribution.

If you wish to ask a question, answer a question, or make a contribution to the class, please ask to be recognized. There is no excuse for conducting a private discussion during class time. I will treat a pattern of talking in class as an unexcused absence.

Make-Up Exams and Quizzes

Since you may take exams and quizzes at your convenience, there will be no make-ups. Period. The opening and closing dates and times will be listed in the calendar.

Late Work

For papers, I will leave the assignment window open for five days after the due date. The grade will be lowered a grade increment for every day it’s late.

University Policies

Academic Honesty

Students are expected to be familiar with the University’s Academic Honesty, Policy & Procedures. The policy on Academic Honesty and other information regarding student conduct can be accessed from the University Policy Manual (http://www.csus.edu/umanual/index.htm).
The University Library has a helpful treatment of plagiarism at http://library.csus.edu/content2.asp?pageID=353.

The University has very helpful information on plagiarism at the Library’s Plagiarism Website.

Reasonable Accommodation Policy

If you have a disability and require accommodations, you need to provide disability documentation to Services for Students with Disabilities (SSWD). For more information please visit the SSWD website (http://www.csus.edu/sswd/). They are located in Lassen Hall 1008 and can be contacted by phone at (916) 278-6955 (Voice) (916) 278-7239 (TDD only) or via email at sswd@csus.edu.

Please discuss your accommodation needs with me after early in the semester. Don’t wait until the first exam or paper.

University Resources

The CSUS Writing Center

The Writing Center provides encouraging, focused, and non-judgmental one-to-one tutorials in writing. Their tutors can help with writing at all points in the process, from initial planning and organizing through developing and revising a paper. You can bring the assignment to them for help.

Sac State Library

The Sac State Library’s webpage is http://library.csus.edu. To find a book or periodical, click on “Eureka: Library Catalogue” under “Resources and Collections or go directly to http://eureka.lib.csus.edu/

For a largely undergraduate institution, the Sac State library’s holdings and resources in philosophy are pretty good. I particularly recommend Sac State librarian Lisa Roberts’ website “Philosophy: Resources.” Two ways to find it: through “Research Guides” under “Resources and Collections”, or go directly to http://library.csus.edu/guides/robertsl/philoguide.htm

Student Computing Labs

To access SacCT from campus, or use any of the other campus online resources, you can use the IRT managed student computer labs on campus. See University Labs website, that is, http://www.csus.edu/uccs/labs/generalinfo/about.stm for information about locations, hours, and resources available.

SacCT

SacCT is the course management system used on the Sac State campus for web-assisted courses. To access a course on SacCT, you must login from the SacCT Login Page (https://online.csus.edu).

To learn more about SacCT visit the Student Resources webpage (http://www.csus.edu/WebCT/student/) where you can view online Tutorials, FAQ’s and other help resources.
**Course Schedule**

**Introduction: Metaphysical Questions Among Philosophical Questions**

What we are supplying are really remarks on the natural history of human beings; we are not contributing curiosities however, but observations which no one has doubted, but which have escaped remark only because they are always before our eyes.

Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Due Dates</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 1</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>F 1/27</strong></td>
<td>F: Solutions to Plato’s Beard</td>
<td>F: [Lecture]</td>
<td>F:</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 2</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>W 2/1</strong></td>
<td>W: Quine’s Criterion and the Task of Ontology</td>
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**Part I: The Nature of Space and Time**

6.4312 The solution of the riddle of life in space and time lies outside space and time.

Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*

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<tr>
<th>Week 3</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Due Dates</th>
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</thead>
</table>
### Week 4
**M 2/13**
M: Is Space Three Dimensional?

**W 2/15**
W: What Must Be in the World for Anything to be ‘Left’ or ‘Right’ of Anything Else?

**F 2/17**
F: The Unreality of Time

- M: Van Cleve, “Incongruent Counterparts and Higher Dimensions,” 168-175
- W: [Lecture]
- F: McTaggart, from *The Nature of Existence*, 116-123

### Week 5
**M 2/20**
M: McTaggart (Cont.)

**W 2/22**
W: Objections to McTaggart’s Argument

**F 2/24**
F: Is There Anything Special about the Present?

- M: McTaggart, from *The Nature of Existence*, 116-123
- W: Broad, “McTaggart’s Arguments...,” 124-131

### Week 6
**M 2/27**
M: A Tenseless World

**W 2/29**
W: “Thank Heavens, That’s Over!”

- M: Williams, “The Myth of Passage,” 149-161

### Part II: The Furniture of Reality
1.1 The World is the totality of facts, not of things.
Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*

### Universals
**F 3/2**
F: The Problem of Universals: *Universalia ante Res; Universalia in Rebus*

- F: Reading Quiz 13: “Metaphysics Toolkit,” Van Inwagen &
## Week 7

- **M 3/5**
  - M: Guest Lecturer

- **W 3/7**
  - W: Exam 1

- **F 3/9**
  - F: No class meeting

## Week 8

- **M 3/12**
  - M: Nominalism and Other Reductive Strategies

- **W 3/14**
  - W: Resemblance v. *Universalia in Rebus*

- **F 3/16**
  - F: Trope Theory

## Individuals

- **Week 9**
  - **M 3/19**
    - M: Spring Recess
  
  - **W 3/21**
    - W: Spring Recess
  
  - **F 3/23**
    - F: Spring Recess

- **Week 10**
  - **M 3/26**
    - M: Leibniz’s Principle

  - **W 3/28**
    - W: Leibniz’s Principle (cont.)

  - **F 3/30**
    - F: The Two Spheres Problem Updated

## Part III: Identity

### Identity Through Change

6.371 The whole modern conception of the world is founded on the illusion that the so-called laws of nature are the explanations of natural phenomena.

Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F 4/6</td>
<td>F:</td>
<td>Can Objects Change by gaining or losing parts</td>
<td>F: Olson, “The Paradox of Increase,” 241-263</td>
<td>F: Reading Quiz 20: Olson, “Paradox of Increase Paper 2 due 11:30 pm.”</td>
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**Identity Through Time**

The sun is new each day.

Heraclitus

| Week 12 | M 4/9 | M: “Mereological Constancy” | M: Olson, “The Paradox of Increase,” 241-263 | M: |

**Week 13**

| W 4/18 | W: The Ontological Importance of the Present (cont.) | W: | W: |

**Part IV: Realism and Anti-Realism**

4. 2211 Even if the world is infinitely complex, so that every fact consists of infinitely many states of affairs and every state of affairs is composed of infinitely many objects, even so there must be objects and states of affairs.

Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*

You can’t get behind the rules, because there isn’t any *behind.*

Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Grammar*
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F 4/20</td>
<td>F: What is ‘Realism’?</td>
<td>F: [Lecture]</td>
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<tr>
<td>M 4/23</td>
<td>M: The Inscrutability of Reference and Ontological Relativity</td>
<td>W: Putnam’s ‘Internal’ Realism</td>
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<tr>
<td>W 4/25</td>
<td>W: Putnam’s ‘Internal’ Realism</td>
<td>F: Internal Realism (cont.)</td>
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<td>F 4/27</td>
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<tr>
<td>M 4/30</td>
<td>M: Conceptual Relativism</td>
<td>W: Sosa’s Conceptual Relativism (Cont.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>W 5/2</td>
<td>W: Sosa’s Conceptual Relativism (Cont.)</td>
<td>F: Are We Really Driven to Ontological Relativity by Weird Sortals like ‘Snowdiscall’?</td>
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<td>F 5/4</td>
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<td>F: [Lecture]</td>
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<td>Week 15</td>
<td>M 5/7</td>
<td>W 5/9</td>
<td>F 5/11</td>
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<tr>
<td>M 5/7</td>
<td>M: Strange Kinds and Ordinary Objects</td>
<td>W: Kicking It Old-School: What About Aristotelian Hylomorphism?</td>
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<tr>
<td>F 5/11</td>
<td>F: Paper Workshop</td>
<td>F: [Discussion on papers]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finals Week</td>
<td>M 5/14</td>
<td>W 5/16</td>
<td>F 5/18</td>
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<td>F 5/18</td>
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The descriptions and due dates are subject to change for pedagogical reasons.

**Paper Topics**

**Paper 1 (due Monday, February 19, 11:30 pm)**

(4 pages)
Given what we have discussed in Metaphysics class thus far...
Choose an entity (or category of entity) which is widely believed to exist, but which you think we should not countenance.

The paper should consider the following points:

a) Why do some people countenance it? That is, what role does it play in their ontology? (No disparaging psychological diagnoses: give their reasons);
b) Why do you not accept it? Give your argument for its nonexistence;
c) On your account, what takes its place, or plays its role in your ontology? (Alternatively, explain why nothing need play that role.)

Do not write on Santa Claus, UFOs, Bigfoot, or anything like that. They don't raise metaphysical problems.

**Paper 2 (due Friday, April 6, 11:30 pm)**

(4-7 pages)
Give your account of Max Black's "Two Spheres' problem, presented in his essay, "The Identity of Indiscernibles," and updated in Zimmerman's "Distinct Indiscernibles and the Bundle Theory."

Comment in particular on the following:

a) Black and Zimmerman clearly believe that the ‘Two Spheres’ thought experiment shows that the Identity of Indiscernibles is false: A world containing two spheres with all and only the same properties is a possible world.

Do you agree?

If so, what theory of individuals do you favor instead, and for what reasons?

If not, where do Black's and Zimmerman's arguments fail?

b) Are there any properties by which the sphere(s) a and b can be distinguished? If so, what properties are they?

**Paper 3 (due Friday, May 18, 11:30 pm)**

(7-10 pages)
Take on a metaphysical problem of your own choosing and write a scholarly argumentative paper.

It doesn't have to be one we've studied in class.

Clear your topic with me first.

**Good luck in all your courses this semester!**