PHIL 181: METAPHYSICS
SPRING 2008
MWF 11:00-11:50
Douglass Hall 208
WebCT-Assisted

PROF. THOMAS PYNE  MND-3032  278-7288
E-Mail  pynetf@csus.edu
Website:  http://www.csus.edu/indiv/p/pynetf/
WebCT:  https://online.csus.edu/

PHILOSOPHY DEPT.  MND-3032  278-6424
FAX  278-5364

OFFICE HOURS: MW 1:00-2:00; By Appt.

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 contributions to the solution of metaphysical problems by contemporary philosophers.
Finally, the course will require some metaphysical investigation by the student, as well as some writing.
PHIL 181: Metaphysics is the designated course for assessing the information competence of philosophy majors, so an Information Competence Assessment will constitute one of the requirements of the course.


Metaphysics Toolkit

ASSIGNMENTS:
Two exams at assigned times (15% each)
A final exam (15%)
Three papers: Paper 1 & 2, 4 pages (15% each); paper 3, 7-10 pages (20%).
Reading Quizzes and Information Competence Assessment (5%)

PHIL 181: Metaphysics is the department-designated class for information competency assessment of Philosophy majors. Thus there will be assignments designed to assess your ability to use information resources like the library resources, databases, reference works, etc.
POLICIES:

WebCT
This class will use some elements of WebCT. WebCT 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 discussion.

I will make important course content available, including lecture notes and other supplementary material. You will take reading quizzes and exams on WebCT, and you will submit papers through it.

Exams
We will review the material for each exam briefly during the classes preceding, explaining what concepts and abilities the exam will test for. I welcome questions, even at times outside that review period.

To take an exam in WebCT:
- Enter WebCT 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).
- Open the correct assessment; there you will see the questions.
- Answer the questions within the provided space.
- You will have only one chance to take the exam, so check your answers before saving each one, as well as before submitting the entire exam.

I will open the window for each exam for approximately two days. You may take it at any time during the open-window period. The exams will be timed. You will have 75 minutes for the first two exams, two hours for the third.

Papers
Follow the directions for argumentative papers found in the “Guidelines for Writing Philosophy Papers” at the Philosophy Department website. Go to the Main Page (http://www.csus.edu/phil), click on “Dept. Program and Requirements,” then click on “Guidelines…” Or go directly to:
http://www.csus.edu/phil/req/writing.htm

Papers will be graded according to the “Grading Guidelines for Philosophy Papers.” Go to the same menu as for the paper guidelines, or go directly to:
http://www.csus.edu/phil/req/grading.htm

To submit a paper in WebCT:
- In the main WebCT page for PHIL 181, open “Assignments” under “Course Tools” on the left margin.
- Open the correct assignment; there you will see the text of the assignment itself, as well as the due date and time. You will also see an “Attachment” button.
- Attach your paper as an editable file; anything that will open in Microsoft Word will do (not a .pdf or .htm file); if you’re unsure, attach it as a ‘text’ or ‘rich text’ (.txt or .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 will leave the window open for submitting papers for five days past the due date.
I will read your paper, make comments, assign a grade, then attach the graded paper to the assignment. You will be able to open or download the paper from the particular Assignment page.

**Plagiarism**

Save a copy of earlier drafts and notes for your papers. If I suspect plagiarism, the burden of proof will be on *you*. You will have to show that you did *not* plagiarize. You can sustain that burden of proof by showing me the work you did preparing the paper: notes, early drafts, etc. Keep what you need to show me that it's your work.

**Reading Quizzes**

There will be a reading quiz on almost every reading assignment. A reading quiz will consist of between five and ten questions designed so that a careful reader should be able to answer them. The quiz will be due by the opening of the class period in which the reading will be discussed.

Reading quizzes will be found on the “Assessments” page in WebCT. Follow the instructions for exams above.

**Class Meetings and 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. I will lower you a grade increment for every unexcused absence.

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

I expect silent attention 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.

**Grades**

Exams will be graded on the following scale:

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Papers will be graded by the criteria in “Grading Guidelines for Philosophy Papers”.

Quizzes will be given a grade of 2 (good or adequate), 1 (inadequate), or 0 (not turned in).
An average above 1.7 will give you 100 for that component (5%) of your final grade.

The course grade will be determined by the weighted average of the exams and papers.

**SYLLABUS**

[Page numbers refer to Text]

**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*

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**Week 1:** 1/28  What is a Philosophical Question? Which Philosophical Questions are Metaphysical?

*Metaphysics Toolkit; Van Inwagen & Zimmerman, “Introduction,” 1-7*

1/30  What is it to ‘Countenance’ an Entity?  
Quine’s Criterion  
Plato’s Beard/Ockham’s Razor

2/1  (Assistant Professor Candidate Visit)

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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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**Week 2:** 2/4  Solutions to Plato’s Beard

2/6  The Earliest Metaphysicians: Parmenides and Zeno  
[Lecture]

**Space**

2/8  Is Space Discrete or Continuous?  
[Max Black, “Achilles and the Tortoise,” 120-9]

**Week 3:** 2/11  Can Anything Concrete Actually Be Infinite?  
[Wesley Salmon, “A Contemporary Look at Zeno’s Paradoxes,” 129-149]

2/13  Is Space Substantial or Relational?  

2/15  Is Space Three-Dimensional?
[James Van Cleve, “Incongruent Counterparts and Higher Dimensions,” 111-120]

Week 4: 2/18 What Must Be in the World for Anything to be “Left” or “Right” of Anything Else? [Lecture]

**Time**

2/20 The Unreality of Time
[J.M.E. McTaggart, from *The Nature of Existence*, 67-74]

2/22 McTaggart (cont.)

Week 5: 2/25 Objections to McTaggart’s Argument
[C.D. Broad, “McTaggart’s Arguments…,” 74-79]

2/27 Is There Anything Special About the Present?

2/29 A Tenseless World

**Paper #1 due Friday, February 29, Midnight.**

Week 6: 3/3 “Thank heavens, That’s Over!”

**Part II: The Furniture of Reality**

1.1 The world is the totality of facts, not of things
Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logic-Philosophicus*

**Universals**

3/5 The Problem of Universals: *Universalia ante Res; Universalia in Rebus*  
[Metaphysics Toolkit; Van Inwagen & Zimmerman, Introduction, 7-13 ]

3/7 Nominalism and Other Forms of Reduction  
[Lecture]

**The window for Exam #1 will open on Friday, March 7, 12:00 noon and remain open until Monday, March 10, 11:00 am. The exam must be taken during that time.**

Week 7: 3/10 Resemblance vs. *Universalia in Rebus*
Particulars

Week 8: 3/17 The “Problem of Individuals”

3/19 Leibniz’s Principle (cont.)
[Max Black, “The Identity of Indiscernibles” (Copy)]

3/21 Leibniz’s Principle and the Two Spheres Problem (Cont.)

Week 9: 3/24 The Two Spheres Problem (Cont.)

3/26 The Two Spheres Problem Updated
[Dean Zimmerman, “Distinct Indiscernibles and the Bundle Theory,” 58-66]

3/28 The Two-Spheres Problem Updated (Cont.)

Week 10: 3/31 Spring Recess

4/2 ”

4/4 ”

Part III: Identity

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

Identity through Change

Week 11: 4/7 The Ship of Theseus
[Lecture]

4/9 The Error Theory of Identity through Change
Paper #2 due: Wednesday, April 9, Midnight.
4/11 The Supervenience Theory
   [Roderick Chisholm, “Identity through Time,” 173-185]

Identity through Time
Week 12: 4/14 How do Objects Persist Through Time (If They Do)?
   [Lecture]
4/16 Four-Dimensional “Time Slices”
   [W.V.O. Quine, “Identity, Ostension, and Hypostasis,” 186-188; W.V.O. Quine, “Identity,” from Quiddities, 188-190;]
4/18 “Babies’ legs on one end and old-people’s legs on the other”:
   ‘Tralfamadorean’ Ontology
   [David Lewis, “In Defense of Stages,” 190-2; David Lewis, “The Problem of Temporary Intrinsics,” from On The Plurality of Worlds, 204-206]

Week 13: 4/21 Perdurance as Metaphysically Favored
   [Lewis (cont.)]
4/23 Endurance as Metaphysically Favored
   [Peter Geach, “Some Problems About Time,” 192-204]

The Exam #2 window will open on Wednesday, April 23, 5:00 pm, and remain open until Saturday, April 26, 5:00 pm.

4/25 The Ontological Importance of the Present
   [Dean Zimmerman, “Temporary Intrinsics and Presentism,” 206-219]

Week 14: 4/28 Aristotelian Substances as ‘Continuants’
   [Lecture]

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

4/30 What is “Realism”? 
   [Lecture]
The Inscrutability of Reference and Ontological Relativity
[W.V.O. Quine, “Speaking of Objects,” 385-388]

Week 15:
5/5 Putnam’s ‘Internal’ Realism: Linguistic Conventionalism

5/7 Putnam’s Internal Realism (Cont.)

5/9 Conceptual Relativism

Week 16:
5/12 Sosa’s Conceptual Relativism (Cont.)
[Ernest Sosa, “Addendum…,” 407-410]

5/14 “Just More Metaphysics”
[Putnam and Sosa (Cont.)]

5/16 What about Good Old Aristotelian Hylomorphism?

Paper #3 due: Friday, May 16, midnight.

The Final Exam window will open Monday, May 19, 10:00 and remain open until Wednesday, May 21, 12:15 pm.
PAPER TOPICS

Paper #1 (4 pages): Due Friday, February 29, Midnight.
Given what we have discussed in metaphysics class thus far…
Choose an entity (or kind of entity)* which is widely believed to exist, but which you
discountenance.

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 remarks: 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.)
   d) Where did the believers go wrong? What motivates your superior view of the
      matter?
(*Not Santa Claus, UFOs, Bigfoot, or anything like that. They don’t raise metaphysical
problems.)

Paper #2 (4 pages): Due Wednesday, April 9, Midnight.
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.”
Within the constraints of the thought experiment, comment in particular on the following
questions:
   a. Black and Zimmerman clearly believe that the 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 one.
      Do you agree?
      If so, what theory of individuals do you favor instead?
      If not, how does 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?
   c. How does the issue regarding the nature of space affect the controversy?

Paper #3 (7-10 pages): Due Friday, May 16, Midnight.
Take on a metaphysical problem of your choice. It doesn’t have to be one we’ve studied in
class.
Clear your topic with me first.