PHIL 181: METAPHYSICS
Fall 2006
M 5:30-8:20
MND-3009
WebCT-Assisted

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OFFICE HOURS: M 4:00-5:00; W 3:00-4:00; By Appt.

OBJECTIVES:
The course is designed to give a systematic introduction to philosophical problems that are metaphorical; 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.

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 (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
The class will use some elements of WebCT. I will make important course content available on WebCT, including the lecture slides. You will take the reading quizzes, midterm, and final on WebCT. You will also submit papers via WebCT. The WebCT site is available at https://online6.csus.edu

Class Meetings
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 5:30 on the day you miss. I will lower you a grade increment for every unexcused absence.

Class meetings will begin at 5:30 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.

We’ll have a short break from 7:00 to 7:10. I will pass around a sign-up sheet when we reconvene.

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.

**Reading Assignments**

You will be responsible for the entirety of all readings assigned. However, at times I will indicate that I will pay particular attention to some part of a reading. As a result, it may happen that other parts of the reading will not be treated in class. You will be responsible for them anyway. If you don’t understand something, ask a question. Remember, students’ questions help me too.

**Exams**

You will be able to take the midterm and final via WebCT. I will “open the window” for each exam for twenty-four hours (from noon to noon). The exams will be timed; once you begin, you will have one hour for the midterm, two hours for the final.

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

**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

Submit papers as an editable attachment through WebCT by the date and time due. Later 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.
Save a copy of your earlier drafts and notes. If I suspect plagiarism, the burden of proof will be on you. You can sustain that burden 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.

**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.) You have to be present at a class meeting to take a quiz. An average above 1.5 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*

Week 1: 9/4 **Labor Day (Campus Closed)**

Week 2: 9/11 What is a Philosophical Question? Which Philosophical Questions are Metaphysical?


What is it to “countenance” an entity? Ockham’s Razor
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*

Week 3: 9/18 The Earliest Metaphysicians: Parmenides and Zeno

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

Can Anything Concrete Actually Be Infinite?
[Wesley Salmon, “A Contemporary Look at Zeno’s Paradoxes,” 129-149]

Space
Week 4: 9/25 Is Space Substantial or Relational?

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

What Must Be in the World for Anything to be “Left” or “Right” of Anything Else?

Time
Week 5: 10/2 The Unreality of Time
[J.M.E. McTaggart, from *The Nature of Existence*, 67-74]

Objections to McTaggart’s Argument
[C.D. Broad, “McTaggart’s Arguments…,” 74-79]

Week 6: 10/9 Is There Anything Special About the Present?

A Tenseless World

“Thank heavens, That’s Over!”

Paper #1 due Monday, October 9.
Part II: The Furniture of Reality

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

Universals
Week 7: 10/16 The Problem of Universals: *Universalia ante Res, Universalia in Rebus*
[Metaphysics Toolkit, Van Inwagen & Zimmerman, Introduction, 7-13]

Nominalism and Other Forms of Reduction

The Exam #1 window will open Monday, October 16 at 8:30 pm and remain open until Tuesday, October 17 at 8:30 pm. The exam must be taken during that time.

Week 8: 10/23 Resemblance vs. *Universalia in Rebus*
(H.H. Price, “Universals and Resemblances,” from *Thinking and Experience, 23-40*

Tropes
[D.C. Williams, “The Elements of Being,” 40-52]

Particulars
Week 9: 10/30 The “Problem of Individuals”

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

Week 10: 11/6 The Two Spheres Problem Updated
[Dean Zimmerman, “Distinct Indiscernibles and the Bundle Theory,” 58-66]

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: 11/13 The Ship of Theseus: Do Objects Persist through Change?

The “Error Theory” of Persistence through Change
[Antoine Arnauld and Pierre Nicole, “Of Confused Subjects which are Equivalent to Two Subjects…,” 171-173]

Mereological Essentialism
[Roderick Chisholm, “Identity through Time,” 173-185]
Identity through Time

Week 12: 11/20 How do Objects Persist Through Time (If they Do)?

Four-Dimensional “Time Slices”
The Argument from Naturalized Epistemology
[W.V.O. Quine, “Identity, Ostension, and Hypostasis,” 186-188;
W.V.O. Quine, “Identity,” from Quiddities, 188-190]

The Argument from Temporary Intrinsics
[David Lewis, “In Defense of Stages,” 190-2; David Lewis, “The
Problem of Temporary Intrinsics,” from On The Plurality of Worlds, 204-6]


Week 13: 11/27 How do Objects Persist Through Time (If they Do)?

Three-Dimensional “Continuants”
A Whole Raft of Counter-arguments against Time Slices
[Peter Geach, “Some Problems About Time,” 192-204]

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

The Exam #2 window will open Monday, November 27 at 8:30 pm and remain open
until Tuesday, November 28, 8:30 pm.

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

Week 14: 12/4 What is Realism?

The Inscrutability of Reference and Ontological
Relativity
[W.V.O. Quine, “Speaking of Objects,” 385-388]

Putnam’s ‘Internal’ Realism: Linguistic Conventionalism
Week 15:  12/11 Conceptual Relativism

What about Good Old Aristotelian Essentialism?

Concluding Thoughts

Paper #3 due: Friday, December 15.

The final exam window will open Monday, December 18, 5:00 pm and remain open until Tuesday, December 19, 5:00 pm.

PAPER TOPICS

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 refuse to 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 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 UFOs, Bigfoot, the Tooth Fairy, or anything like that. They don’t raise metaphysical problems.)

Give your account of the “Two Spheres” problem as presented in Max Black’s dialogue, “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 instead? If not, how does the thought experiment fail?

b. Are there any properties by which the sphere(s) \( a \) and \( b \) be distinguished? If so, what properties are they, and why? If not, why not?

c. How does the issue regarding the nature of space affect the controversy?

Paper # 3 (7-10 pages): Due Friday, December 15.
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.