PHIL 181: METAPHYSICS
SPRING 2007
MWF 10:00-10:50
Mendocino Hall 4005
WebCT-Assisted

PROF. THOMAS PYNE MND-3032 278-7288
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PHILOSOPHY DEPT. MND-3032 278-6424
FAX 278-5364

OFFICE HOURS: MW 2:00-3:00; 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.

TEXT: Peter van Inwagen & Dean W. Zimmerman, editors. Metaphysics: The Big

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 WebCT.

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.
  • 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 submitting the exam.
I will open the window for each exam for forty-eight hours. 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 file).
  • 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**

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 10:00 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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<th>Grade</th>
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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 1.5 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.
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: 1/29 What is a Philosophical Question? Which Philosophical Questions are Metaphysical?  

1/31 What is it to ‘Countenance’ an Entity?  
Quine’s Criterion

2/2 Plato’s Beard/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 2: 2/5 The Earliest Metaphysicians: Parmenides and Zeno  
[Lecture]

2/7 Is Space Discrete or Continuous?  
[Max Black, “Achilles and the Tortoise,” 120-9]

2/9 Can Anything Concrete Actually Be Infinite?  
[Wesley Salmon, “A Contemporary Look at Zeno’s Paradoxes,” 129-149]

**Space**  
Week 3: 2/12 Is Space Substantial or Relational?  

2/14 Is Space Three-Dimensional?  
[James Van Cleve, “Incongruent Counterparts and Higher Dimensions,” 111-120]

2/16 What Must Be in the World for Anything to be “Left” or “Right” of Anything Else?  
[Lecture]
**Time**

**Week 4:** 2/19  
The Unreality of Time  
[J.M.E. McTaggart, from *The Nature of Existence*, 67-74]

2/21  
McTaggart (cont.)

2/23  
Objections to McTaggart’s Argument  
[C.D. Broad, “McTaggart’s Arguments…,” 74-79]

**Week 5:** 2/26  
Is There Anything Special About the Present?  

2/28  
A Tenseless World  

3/2  
“Thank heavens, *That’s Over!*”  

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**Paper #1 due Friday, March 2, Midnight.**

**Part II: The Furniture of Reality**

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

**Universals**

**Week 6:** 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 Wednesday, March 7, 5:00pm and remain open until March 9, 5:00 pm. The exam must be taken during that time.**

3/9  
Nominalism and Other Forms of Reduction (cont.)  
[Lecture]

**Week 7:** 3/12  
Resemblance vs. *Universalia in Rebus*  

3/14  
Tropes  
[D.C. Williams, “The Elements of Being,” 40-52]
### Particulars

**Week 8:**
- **3/19**  The “Problem of Individuals”  
- **3/21**  Leibniz’s Principle (cont.)  
  [Max Black, “The Identity of Indiscernibles” *Copy]*
- **3/23**  Leibniz’s Principle and the Two Spheres Problem (Cont.)

**Week 9:**
- **3/26**  **Spring Recess**
- **3/28**  “
- **3/30**  “

**Week 10:**
- **4/2**  The Two Spheres Problem (Cont.)
- **4/4**  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**

- **4/6**  The Ship of Theseus  
  [Lecture]

**Week 11:**
- **4/9**  The Error Theory of Identity through Change  
  [Antoine Arnauld and Pierre Nicole, “Of Confused Subjects which are Equivalent to Two Subjects…,” 171-173]
- **4/11**  The Supervenience Theory  
  [Roderick Chisolm, “Identity through Time,” 173-185]

**Paper #2 due: Wednesday, April 11, Midnight.**

**Identity through Time**

- **4/13**  How do Objects Persist Through Time (If They Do)?
Week 12: 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

4/20 Perdurance as Metaphysically Favored
[Lewis (cont.)]

Week 13: 4/23 Endurance as Metaphysically Favored
[Peter Geach, “Some Problems About Time,” 192-204]

The Exam #2 window will open on Monday, April 23, 5:00 pm, and remain open until Wednesday, April 25, 5:00 pm.

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

4/27 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

Week 14: 4/30 What is “Realism”?
[Lecture]

5/2 The Inscrutability of Reference and Ontological Relativity
[W.V.O. Quine, “Speaking of Objects,” 385-388]

5/4 Putnam’s ‘Internal’ Realism: Linguistic Conventionalism
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<th>Putnam’s Internal Realism (Cont.)</th>
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<td>Sosa’s Conceptual Relativism (Cont.)</td>
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<td>[Ernest Sosa, “Addendum…,” 407-410]</td>
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<td>Week 16:</td>
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<td>“Just More Metaphysics”</td>
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<td>[Putnam and Sosa (Cont.)]</td>
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<td>5/16</td>
<td>What about Good Old Aristotelian Hylomorphism?</td>
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<td>5/18</td>
<td>Concluding Thoughts</td>
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**Paper #3 due: Friday, May 18, midnight.**

**The Final Exam window will open Monday, May 21, 10:00 and remain open until Wednesday, May 23, 10:00.**
PAPER TOPICS

**Paper #1 (4 pages): Due Friday, March 2, 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 11, 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 18, 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.