

PHIL 126: METAPHYSICS

Fall 2009

MW 9:35 a.m.; BC 33

Professor Amy Kind
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Office Hours:
M 2:00 – 4:00 p.m.
Th 9:00 – 10:30 a.m.
or by appointment

Course Description

The study of metaphysics is the study of the nature of reality. In this course, we will take up some fundamental metaphysical questions about the nature of objects, including questions about the nature of a specific class of objects, namely, persons. Some of the questions we will consider: What kinds of things exist? What are properties? What is the nature of time? Is time travel possible? What makes an object the same object over time? What makes a person the same person over time?

This course has a prerequisite of one previous college-level course in philosophy or my consent. If you have not had a previous college-level course in philosophy and you have not already talked to me, then you need to talk to me immediately.

Course Texts

There is one required text for the course which should be available for purchase at Huntley bookstore : *Arguing About Metaphysics*, ed. Michael C. Rea (Routledge). Additional readings will be posted on our Sakai course website.

Course Requirements

Papers (70% total)

There will be two papers on assigned topics, each accounting for 35% of your course grade. Each paper should be approximately 6-8 pages in length. Paper #1 will be due at the **start of class on Monday, Nov. 2**. Paper #2 will be due **Thursday, Dec. 17 at 12 noon**.

Response Papers (30% total)

Each student will have to five short (2 page) papers responding to the assigned readings. I will assign six of these of which you have to complete only five; if you do all six, I will drop your lowest grade. On these assignments, you will generally have to explain part of the author's argument and engage with it critically. The response

papers will be assigned primarily in the first half of the semester. Since the purpose of these exercises is to grapple with some philosophical material on your own, it is especially important that they be submitted in a timely fashion, prior to our class discussion of the matter.

Attendance and Participation

Attendance in class is required. We will be starting promptly at 9:35 a.m., and I expect you to be punctual. Barring exceptional circumstances, you should not be absent from class more than two times over the course of the semester. However, it is not enough merely to attend; you must also come to class having read and thought carefully about the assigned readings so that you are prepared to take an active part in our discussions. In general, you should be consistently and thoughtfully participating in our class discussions. By “thoughtful” I mean to remind you that it is quality, and not mere quantity, that matters when it comes to class participation. Although class participation does not account for a pre-set percentage of your course grade, I reserve the right either to lower your course grade for inadequate participation or to raise your course grade for exceptional participation. *Also: Please make sure your cell phones are silenced during class.*

Extra Credit Opportunity

During the semester, you can take advantage of an opportunity to earn extra credit by exploring the presentation of metaphysics in fiction or film. You should choose a work of fiction or a film that raises a metaphysical issue related to our class material and analyzing the work’s treatment of that issue. Your analysis should be approximately 4 pages. Books/films must be approved by me in advance. A satisfactory analysis will raise your first paper grade by 1/3 of a grade (e.g., from a B- to a B). An exceptional analysis will raise your first paper grade by 2/3 of a grade (e.g., from a B- to a B+). If you wish to take advantage of the extra credit opportunity, come talk to me during office hours to make the arrangements. Extra credit analyses may be submitted at any time during the semester, but no later than Friday, December 4. *No student may do more than one extra credit analysis.*

Tentative Course Schedule

The following is a tentative reading schedule for the class. I might make some changes to it based on class interest. If there are any changes, they will be announced in class and on Sakai/via email. All readings should be completed by the class period indicated. Readings marked (S) are available online at our Sakai course website. When you access a reading via Sakai, please print out a copy for yourself, and please always bring the relevant course texts with you to class.

- Wed., Sept. 2 Intro to the class
 **Background reading: van Inwagen, "What is Metaphysics?"
- Mon., Sept. 7 Lewis & Lewis, "Holes"
- Wed., Sept. 9 Russell, "The World of Universals" (S)
 Armstrong, "The Problem" (S)
- Mon., Sept. 14 Quine, "On What There Is"
 Fitzgerald, "Nominalist Things"
- Wed., Sept. 16 Loux, "Nominalism" (S)
- Mon., Sept. 21 van Cleve, "Three Versions of the Bundle Theory" (S)
- Wed., Sept. 23 Black, "The Identity of Indiscernibles" (S)
- Mon., Sept. 28 Allaire, "Bare Particulars" (S)
- Wed., Sept. 30 McTaggart, "Time" (S)
- Mon., Oct. 5 Markosian, "A Defense of Presentism"
- Wed., Oct. 7 Smart, "The Space-Time World" (S)
- Mon., Oct. 12 Lewis, "The Paradoxes of Time Travel"
 Wells, "The Time Traveller's Speech"
 **also recommended: Hunter, "Time Travel" (S)
- Wed., Oct. 14 Hanley, "No End in Sight: Causal Loops in Philosophy, Physics, and Fiction"
- Mon., Oct. 19 **FALL BREAK**
- Wed., Oct. 21 Parmenides/David Lewis, "Problems about Change"
 Merricks, "Endurance and Indiscernibility" (S)
- Mon., Oct. 26 Chisholm, "Identity and Temporal Parts"
- Wed., Oct. 28 Lowe, "On the Identity of Artifacts" (S)
- Mon., Nov. 2 *Intro to Personal Identity – no reading*
- Wed., Nov. 4 Dennett, "Conditions of Personhood" (S)
- Mon., Nov. 9 Locke, "Of Identity and Diversity" (S)
 Reid, "Of Identity" (S)
 Reid, "Of Mr. Locke's Account of Our Personal Identity" (S)
- Wed., Nov. 11 Williams, "Personal Identity and Individuation" (S)
 Wilkes, excerpt from *Real People* (S)
- Mon., Nov. 16 Williams, "The Self and the Future" (S)
- Wed., Nov. 18 Parfit, "Personal Identity"
 Egan, "Dust"
- Mon., Nov. 23 Olson, "An Argument for Animalism"
- Wed., Nov. 25 **NO CLASS**
- Mon., Nov. 30 Lewis, "A Philosopher's Paradise"
- Wed., Dec. 2 Plantinga, "Two Concepts of Modality"
- Mon., Dec. 7 Tegmark, "Parallel Universes"
- Wed., Dec. 9 Leslie, "World Ensemble, or Design"