

Metaphysics

Place: TBD

Time: TBD

Instructor: Eric de Araujo

Office: TBD

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Office Hours: TBD

Texts & Materials

Metaphysics: The Big Questions, 2nd Ed., (2008) by Peter van Inwagen and Dean W. Zimmerman.

Readings will come from the above anthology. Additional readings might be posted on Carmen. Bring either your textbook or appropriate readings to class.

Course Description

In this survey of contemporary metaphysics, we will introduce ourselves to and participate in some recent debates among metaphysicians. These include existence and change, and two of: the mind and body, possible worlds, free will, causality, and time/space. We will spend some time orienting ourselves to the terms of debates, but much of our time will be spent discussing primary texts. We will present critical summaries of the texts to one another and construct, critique, and revise our original arguments on the debates we read.

Course Goals & Objectives

A. You will be able to articulate debates in contemporary metaphysics and some of the relationships between them by:

Distinguishing metaphysical debates from other philosophical debates, articulating the main positions in particular debates, restating objections to particular views.

B. You will be able to comprehend and critique others' metaphysical views by:

Identifying the main conclusion of others' arguments, identifying the support given for a conclusion, evaluating the arguments of others, representing the logical structure of arguments, and determining what evidence is relevant to a conclusion.

C. You will be able to present the metaphysical views of others:

Identifying the main conclusions of others' arguments, identifying the support given for a conclusion, evaluating the arguments of others, representing the logical structure of arguments, and summarizing arguments for others.

D. You will be able to contribute to metaphysical debates by:

Identifying the main conclusion of others' arguments, identifying the support given for a conclusion, evaluating the arguments of others, summarizing arguments for others, constructing an original argument, and anticipating and defending views from objections.

Schedule

Here is the schedule we hope to follow. The first table lists the topics and associated readings. Unless specified, each reading comes from our anthology. You should read the material before the first day of discussion. Journal entries are due at the beginning of class. The second table lists when major assignments are due and when exams will occur. The schedule is subject to change as the course progresses. In particular, we will discuss what debates we want to discuss for the last two topics.

Schedule of Readings

Topic	Reading	Day
Existence	Introduction: What is Metaphysics?	2
	David Lewis and Stephanie Lewis "Holes"	
	W. V. O. Quine "On What There Is"	4
	Roderick M. Chisholm "Beyond Being and Nonbeing"	
Change	Antonie Arnauld and Pierre Nicole "Of Confused Subjects which are Equivalent to Two Subjects"	7
	Eric T. Olson "The Paradox of Increase"	9
	W. V. O. Quine "Identity, Ostension, and Hypostatis"	
	David Lewis "In Defense of Stages"	
	David Lewis "The Problem of Temporary Intrinsic"	
	Dean W. Zimmerman "Temporary Intrinsic and Presentism"	
Topic 1 Options:	Reading 1	15
• Mind & Body	Reading 2	
• Possible	Reading 3	18

Worlds	Reading 4	18
• Free Will	Reading 5	20
• Causality	Reading 6	
• Time/Space		
Topic 2 Options:	Reading 1	22
• Mind & Body	Reading 2	24
• Possible Worlds	Reading 3	
	Reading 4	27
• Free Will	Reading 5	
• Causality	Reading 6	
• Time/Space		

Schedule of Assignments

Day	Major Assignment Due	Goals
Throughout	Group Presentation on Reading	C
2	Pre-Course Reflection Paper	D
13	Exam 1	A
17	Essay 1 Draft	B, D
	Peer Review	B
20	Essay 1 Revision	B, D
25	Essay 2 Draft	B, D
	Peer Review	B
28	Exam 2	A
	Post-Course Reflection Paper	D
Exam Week	Essay 2 Revision	B, D

Grading

<i>Journal</i>	<i>20%</i>	<i>Essays</i>	<i>40%</i>
<i>Course Reflections</i>	5%	<i>Draft of Essay 1</i>	4%
<i>Reading Entries</i>	15%	<i>Draft of Essay 2</i>	4%
<i>Exams</i>	<i>20%</i>	<i>Peer Review of Paper 1</i>	4%
<i>Exam 1</i>	10%	<i>Peer Review of Paper 2</i>	4%
<i>Exam 2</i>	10%	<i>Revision of Essay 1</i>	12%
<i>Participation</i>	<i>20%</i>	<i>Revision of Essay 2</i>	12%
Group Presentation on Reading	15%		
Class Participation	5%		

Course Mechanics

The course turns to the reading and examination of philosophical texts right away. We will practice how to read and reflect on arguments throughout the course with journal entries and presentations on the readings. Participation in our class discussion will prepare you to explain the views we are discussing on exams. Finally, we will prepare, critique, and revise two papers where we argue for our own view on debates we discuss.

Discussion

Doing philosophy is like having a conversation on a topic with a lot of people. This makes in class discussion a great way to practice doing philosophy. Discussion is an opportunity for you to ask questions about the reading, offer your own views and criticisms, and respond to the views of your peers. My job is to make the views we are looking at clear to the class and to facilitate a dialogue between you, your peers, and the philosophers we are reading.

I want everyone to grow more comfortable contributing to our in-class discussions. Trying out your ideas with your peers helps improve them. I will offer several ways for you to participate. These will range from large discussions with the whole class to conversations with a partner. In an effort to give everyone an opportunity to participate, I am open to trying different things so that everyone can make a contribution. Again, please contact me if there are any concerns about your contributions to the class.

Journal: Reading Entries

To help you prepare for our discussions, we will be writing short entries in a journal for each reading. The goal of this habit is to help you 1) complete the readings for our discussion, 2) react to what we read, and 3) begin formulating your views.

Reading entries are between 1/2 and 1 pages, submitted online, and due before class starts. They should engage with the text, rather than merely summarize the reading. I will provide more thorough feedback on earlier entries to indicate the quality of these entries.

Journal: Course Reflections

These reflection papers are an opportunity for you to reflect your own views. The initial paper is an opportunity for you to think about what metaphysics is, what you hope to learn, or what views you might already have. The last paper is an opportunity for you to reflect on how your thinking has been shaped, if at all, by the course.

Group Presentations

As part of their research, philosophers summarize and provide criticism of others' work. With group presentations, we will practice doing this in a way that jumpstarts our class discussions.

You will be assigned a group and sign up for a reading to present on. Your group will be responsible for summarizing the main moves in the reading, offering some criticism, and providing questions for the class to discuss. The presentation should last between 15–20 minutes. If you choose to let others engage during your presentation, it will stretch a bit longer (but this is entirely optional).

A draft or outline of the presentation will be uploaded to the course website 2 days before class. This will allow me to incorporate your insights and questions into the class discussion after you present.

Exams

You will not be able to write an essay about all the issues we cover in the course. However, I want you to leave the course feeling well oriented to the debates we discuss. These in-class exams are designed to see how well you comprehend the views we cover. The content will come directly from our discussions in class (including our group presentations). I will provide a sheet of terminology and arguments you should be familiar with to do well on the exams.

Essay Drafts, Peer Review, & Revisions

Much of the dialogue in philosophy today is done through publishing papers. I want you to be able to contribute to the philosophical dialogue by writing your own papers. Like the revision process in academic publishing, we will have a revision process with the papers you write for this course. You will

bring a draft of your paper to class and provide feedback on another student's draft in class. Additionally, I will give you feedback on your drafts. That way you will have a chance to respond to this feedback in the final paper you turn in. More information will be provided during the course.

Office Hours

Office hours tend to be an underutilized resource (unless something is due soon). You are welcome to come and chat about anything related to the course or even philosophy in general. Office hours can be a good way to clear up misconceptions and better understand how you are doing in the course. I will make an effort to find a time to meet if you cannot make it to the scheduled times.

Policies

[I aim to keep policies consistent across courses. See the syllabi for previously taught courses for a list of my policies.]