

Introduction to Metaphysics

Place: TBD

Time: TBD

Instructor: Eric de Araujo

Office: TBD

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Office Hours: TBD

Texts & Materials

Riddles of Existence, 2nd Ed. (2018) by Earl Conee and Theodore Sider.

The Norton Introduction to Philosophy, 2nd Ed. (2018), by Gideon Rosen, Alex Byrne, Joshua Cohen, Elizabeth Harman, and Seana Valentine Shiffrin.

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

Course Description

In this introduction to metaphysics will think about reality like philosophers. First, we will learn how philosophers think, write, and read. Then, we will attempt to distinguish metaphysics from other philosophical domains. But mostly, we will be discussing some metaphysical questions and the different answers philosophers have offered. We will examine debates about Personal Identity, God, Free Will, Constitution, and Universals.

Course Goals & Objectives

A. You will be able articulate various metaphysical views by:

Articulating main positions within metaphysical debates, identifying metaphysical questions, presenting objections to views, and communicating philosophical views to others.

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

Articulating main positions within metaphysical debates, constructing an original argument, identifying the main conclusion of others' arguments, identifying the support given for a conclusion, evaluating the arguments of others, communicating philosophical views to others, 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. *Riddles of Existence* is abbreviated as *Riddles* and *The Norton Introduction to Philosophy* as *Norton*. You should read the material before the first day of discussion. Reading quizzes are due the day of the assigned reading. The second table lists when major assignments are due and when exams will occur. The schedule is subject to change as the course progresses.

Schedule of Readings

Topic	Reading	Day
Philosophy & Arguments	Chapter 1 in <i>Norton</i>	2
	Introduction to <i>Riddles</i>	
Personal Identity	Chapter 1 in <i>Riddles</i>	3
	Introduction to Chapter 11 in <i>Norton</i>	
	"The Dualist Theory, from <i>Personal Identity</i> ," Richard Swinburne in Chapter 11 of <i>Norton</i> (p. 513)	4
	"Personal Identity, from <i>Reasons and Persons</i> ," Derek Parfit in Chapter 11 of <i>Norton</i> (p. 520)	5
	"The Self and the Future," Bernard Williams in Chapter 11 of <i>Norton</i> (p. 533)	6
God	Chapter 4 in <i>Riddles</i>	7
	Introduction to Chapter 1 in <i>Norton</i>	
	"The Ontological Argument, from <i>Proslogion</i> ," Anselm of Canterbury in Chapter 1 of <i>Norton</i> (p. 80)	8
	"The Five Ways, from <i>Summa Theologica</i> ," Thomas Aquinas in <i>Norton</i> (p. 13)	9
	"The Argument from Design, from <i>Natural Theology</i> ," William Paley in Chapter 1 of <i>Norton</i> (p. 20)	10
	"No Good Reason—Exploring the Problem of Evil," Louise Antony in Chapter 1 <i>Norton</i> (p. 36)	11

	“The Problem of Evil,” Eleonore Stump in Chapter 1 <i>Norton</i> (p. 47)	12
Free Will	Chapter 6 in <i>Riddles</i>	13
	Introduction to Chapter 13 in <i>Norton</i>	
	“Free Will,” Galen Strawson in Chapter 13 of <i>Norton</i> (p. 600)	15
	“Human Freedom and the Self,” Roderick Chisholm in Chapter 13 of <i>Norton</i> (p. 610)	17
	“Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person,” Harry Frankfurt in Chapter 13 of <i>Norton</i> (p. 634)	18
	“Sanity and the Metaphysics of Responsibility,” Susan Wolf in Chapter 13 of <i>Norton</i> (p. 645)	19
	“Why Moral Ignorance Is No Excuse,” Nomy Arpaly in Chapter 13 of <i>Norton</i> (p. 658)	20
Constitution	Chapter 7 in <i>Riddles</i>	21
	Introduction to Chapter 10 in <i>Norton</i>	
	“A Thing and Its Matter,” Stephen Yablo in Chapter 10 of <i>Norton</i> (p. 461)	22
	“There Are No Ordinary Things,” Peter Unger in Chapter 10 of <i>Norton</i> (p. 467)	23
Universals	Chapter 8 in <i>Riddles</i>	24
	Introduction to Chapter 10 in <i>Norton</i>	
	“Numbers and Other Immaterial Things,” Gideon Rosen in Chapter 10 of <i>Norton</i> (p. 476)	26
	“Do Numbers Exist?” Penelope Maddy in Chapter 10 of <i>Norton</i> (p. 485)	27

Schedule of Assignments

Day	Major Assignment Due	Goals
2	Find an Argument	B
3	Critique an Argument	B
	Pre-Course Reflection	C
14	Exam 1	A, B
16	Essay 1 Draft	A, B, C
	Peer Review	B
22	Essay 1 Revision	A, B, C
25	Essay 2 Draft	A, B, C
	Peer Review	B
28	Exam 2	A, B
	Post-Course Reflection Paper	C
Exam Week	Essay 2 Revision	A, B, C

Grading

<i>Argument Assignments</i>	10%	<i>Reading Quizzes</i>	10%
<i>Find an Argument</i>	5%	<i>Essays</i>	40%
<i>Critique an Argument</i>	5%	<i>Draft of Essay 1</i>	4%
<i>Exams</i>	30%	<i>Draft of Essay 2</i>	4%
<i>Exam 1</i>	15%	<i>Peer Review of Paper 1</i>	4%
<i>Exam 2</i>	15%	<i>Peer Review of Paper 2</i>	4%
<i>Reflection Papers</i>	5%	<i>Revision of Essay 1</i>	12%
<i>Pre-Course Reflection</i>	2.5%	<i>Revision of Essay 2</i>	12%
<i>Post-Course Reflection</i>	2.5%	<i>Participation</i>	5%

Course Mechanics

I've planned the course to begin with some basic philosophical skills so you can make your own philosophical contributions. We will then examine particular metaphysical debates by first introducing ourselves to them with the *Riddles of Existence* text and then by reading what certain philosophers have to say in *The Norton Introduction to Philosophy* anthology. Here are some of the ways we will do that:

Argument Practice

In the first few weeks I want you to become comfortable with reading, summarizing, and critiquing arguments. We will have several in class activities and homework assignments that will give you practice with these skills.

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.

Reading Quizzes

In order to best utilize our time together, there will be short quizzes for each of the readings on Carmen. These are designed to assess basic comprehension of the material so you are prepared to discuss the material in class. These will partially be graded on completion and partially on accuracy.

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.

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 with an understanding of the metaphysical debates we discussed and the structure of some of the arguments in those debates. These in-class exams are designed to see how well you comprehend the views we cover.

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.

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.]