

topics in metaphysics: metametaphysics

course #: PHIL 450/551

location and time: CLE B315 , Mondays & Thursdays 10:00-11:20 (Fall 2011)

instructor: Mike Raven (mike@mikeraven.net | <http://mikeraven.net/>)

office hours: CLE B323 Mondays & Thursdays 11:30-12:30, or by appointment

Moodle: <http://moodle.uvic.ca/course/view.php?id=18019>

(Paper version of this syllabus may be superseded in class or by electronic versions posted on Moodle.)

overview

objectives This course focuses on the nature and methodology of metaphysics, focusing on questions of ontology, ground, and essence.

prerequisites 9 units of philosophy or permission of the department (for 450) or MA candidacy (for 551). The material is difficult; familiarity with metaphysics and logic strongly urged. Students doubting their preparedness should contact the instructor.

heads-up *"Philosophy is the strangest of subjects: it aims at rigour and yet is unable to establish any results; it attempts to deal with the most profound questions and yet constantly finds itself preoccupied with the trivialities of language; and it claims to be of great relevance to rational enquiry and the conduct of our life and yet is almost completely ignored. But perhaps what is strangest of all is the passion and intensity with which it is pursued by those who have fallen in its grip."* (Kit Fine)

policies

evaluation You pass only if you do all the work. Your course grade solely depends upon the quality and timeliness of your own assignments (90%) and participation (10%). Grades are given in accordance with the university's standard grading scheme:

A+ 100-90	A 89-85	A- 84-80	B+ 79-75	B 74-70
B- 69-65	C+ 64-60	C 59-55	D 54-50	F 49-0

The writing guidelines listed in the 'resources' section offer guidance on by what standard your written work will be evaluated.

late work Due dates are important! Just as completing a 100m dash in 3 hours fails to show one's running skills, so too completing a written assignment late fails to show one's philosophical skills.

Extensions are granted only if a legitimate reason (e.g. illness/personal/religious) is given before the due date. If you do not expect to complete an assignment on time, submit what you have done on time. Late work will be penalized one letter grade per day late. Do not expect comments on late work. Late work will not be accepted for graded and returned assignments.

extra credit There is no extra credit; no exceptions.

plagiarism Academic dishonesty is not tolerated. See the University Calendar for the university's statement on academic integrity (e.g. plagiarism, cheating, etc.).

texts

required *Metametaphysics*, D. Chalmers, D. Manley, & R. Wasserman (eds.)

* Most readings are in the anthology (labeled '[M#]', where '#' is the chapter number) or online.

ontological disputes: case studies

holes "Holes", Lewis & Lewis
material constitution Chapter 7 (*Constitution*) of *Riddles of Existence*, Sider
universals Chapter 8 (*Universals*) of *Riddles of Existence*, Conee
abstracta/numbers Introduction of *A Subject with No Object*, Burgess & Rosen
Optional: Preface & Chapter 1 of Writing the Book of World, Sider

quantification, ontology & ontological commitment

"On What There Is", Quine
"Ontological Commitments", Alston
"Ontological Commitment and Paraphrase", Jackson
"On What There's Not", Melia
"Being, Existence, and Ontological Commitment", Van Inwagen [M16]
"Nominalism", Szabo
Optional: Conclusion of A Subject with No Object, Burgess & Rosen

dismissivism about ontology

ontological pluralism "Empiricism, Semantics, and Ontology", Carnap
"Carnap and Ontological Pluralism", Eklund [M4]
"Ontological Anti-realism", Chalmers [M3]
quantifier variantism "Ontology and Alternative Languages", Hirsch [M8]
"Superficialism in Ontology", Hawthorne [M7]
"Ontological Realism", Sider [M13]
Manuscript against quantifier variantism, Raven
figurative speech "Does Ontology Rest on a Mistake?", Yablo
pessimism "Composition, Colocation, and Metaontology", Bennett [M2]

non-standard ontology

meinongianism "Noneism or Allism?", Lewis
egalitarian metaphysics "Ambitious, Yet Modest Metaphysics", Hofweber [M9]
ways of being "Ways of Being", McDaniel [M10]
fundamental / real "On What Grounds What", Schaffer [M12]

“The Question of Ontology”, Fine [M5]
Manuscript against quantificational ontology, Raven

ground & essence

ground “The Question of Realism”, Fine
“Metaphysical Dependence”, Rosen
“In Defence of Ground”, Raven
“Guide to Ground”, Fine
 Optional: “Some Puzzles of Ground”, Fine
 Optional: “The Pure Logic of Ground”, Fine

essence “Essence and Modality”, Fine
“Senses of Essence”, Fine
 Optional: “The Logic of Essence”, Fine
“Ontological Dependence”, Fine

assignments

Presentations	Students will give presentations to the class. Details will be arranged in class, depending upon the size of the class.		
Undergraduate option 1	Paper 1 (5 pages)	An approved topic	DUE: November 7
	Paper 2 (5 pages)	Another approved topic	DUE: December 8
Undergraduate option 2	Paper 1 (5 pages)	An approved topic	DUE: November 7
	Paper 2 (10 pages)	Expansion of first topic	DUE: December 8
Graduate	Paper 1 (5-7 pages)	An approved topic	DUE: November 7
	Paper 2 (12-15 pages)	Expansion of first topic	DUE: December 8

resources

J. Bennett and S. Goroviz (June 1997), "Improving Academic Writing", *Teaching Philosophy* **20**

Jim Pryor's guide to philosophical terms and methods <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/vocab/>

Jim Pryor's guide to reading philosophy <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/reading.html>

Jim Pryor's guide to writing philosophy <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>

Mike Raven's philosophy paper advice [http://mikeraven.net/docs/\[Raven\] Philosophy paper advice.pdf](http://mikeraven.net/docs/[Raven] Philosophy paper advice.pdf)