

PHIL 100E: METAPHYSICS

University of California, Santa Barbara | Summer 2009 (Session B)

I. BASIC COURSE INFO

LECTURE INFORMATION

Time: TWR 9:30am–10:50am

Location: BREN 1414

Web / Twitter page:

http://twitter.com/may_class

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Joshua May

Office: South Hall, room 5720

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Office Hours: Tues. 2-4pm

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is an introduction to several core topics in contemporary analytic *metaphysics* (roughly, the study of the fundamental nature of reality). The topics we'll likely cover (and the main questions associated with them) are:

1. Universals & Existence: There are lots of particular things that are, say, male. But is there something over and above all these instances, like the property (or "universal") of being male? Need we posit such things, or can we explain all that we need to without doing so?
2. Modality (Necessity, Possibility): Hilary Clinton might have been elected president in 2008. What is the nature of this "modal" fact? Is it, say, because there is another so-called "possible world" in which *she* was so elected?
3. Causation: What is it for one thing or event to cause another? Is there a necessary connection between the cause and its effect? Did the effect *have to* follow the cause? Or is Hume right that there is really only a constant succession of one event following another and an *expectation* on our part that the effect will always follow the cause?
4. Time (& a bit of Space): What is time exactly? Is it even real? Is it an objective sort of thing? Are *tensed* notions like the present essential to time? Or can (and should) time be accurately characterized without them, e.g. in tenseless, four-dimensional *space-time*?
5. Persistence: How do things persist through time? Does, say, the whole thing persist through time or is it merely a series of "time-slices" of that thing?

The material covered in the course will include selections from important contemporary philosophers (primarily from the last 100 years).

REQUIRED TEXTS

- (1) *Metaphysics: Contemporary Readings*, 2nd edition, edited by Michael J. Loux (Routledge, 2008). ISBN 10: 0415962382, ISBN-13: 978-0415962384
(Note: a copy of the text is on reserve in the library for those interested.)

- (2) Additional readings will be provided electronically.

ASSIGNMENTS

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|----------------------|--------------|--------------|----------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Attendance | (in section) | 5% of grade | (your section day) | [weekly] |
| 2. Mid-Term | (in class) | 20% of grade | (Date: Thrs. 8/20) | [3 rd week] |
| 3. Term Paper | (5-7 pages) | 35% of grade | (Due: Thrs. 9/3) | [5 th week] |
| 4. Final Exam | (in class) | 40% of grade | (Date: Thrs. 9/10) | [6 th week] |

Note: These due dates are pretty firm, but they are subject to minor changes. Also, the final exam will *probably not* be cumulative; but I haven't decided yet.

2. READINGS

There is *no exact reading schedule*, and this list is *subject to change*. You'll need to keep coming to class to know where we are on this list and whether any changes have been made.

Topic 1: Universals & Existence

1. M. J. Loux (2008) "The Problem of Universals" (intro to Part I)
2. H. H. Price (1953) "Universals and Resemblances" (ch. 2)
Recommended: Bertrand Russell (1912) "The World of Universals" (ch. 1, esp. p. 17)
3. W. V. Quine (1948) "On What There Is" (ch. 3)

Topic 2: Modality (Necessity, Possibility, and Contingency)

4. M. J. Loux (2008) "Modality and Possible Worlds" (intro to Part II)
5. David Lewis (1986) "Possible Worlds" (ch. 10)
Recommended: Lewis (1973) "Counterparts or Double Lives?" (ch. 12, just pp. 194-6)
6. Saul Kripke (1971) "Identity and Necessity" (ch. 13)

Topic 3: Causation (& a bit of Free Will)

7. M. J. Loux (2008) "Cause and Effect" (intro to Part IV)
8. J. L. Mackie (1965) "Causes and Conditions" (ch. 17)
9. Elizabeth Anscombe (1971) "Causality and Determination" (ch. 16)

Topic 4: Time (& a bit of Space)

10. M. J. Loux (2008) "Time: The A-Theory and the B-Theory" (intro to Part V)
11. J. M. E. McTaggart (1927) "Time" (ch. 19)
Recommended: Dummett (1960) "A Defense of McTaggart's Proof of the Unreality of Time" (excerpt, p. 8, *Philosophical Review*)
12. A. N. Prior (1970) "The Notion of the Present" (ch. 22)
13. J. J. C. Smart (1963) "The Space-Time World" (ch. 23)

Topic 5: Persistence through Time

14. M. J. Loux (2008) "Endurantism and Perdurantism" (intro to Part VI)
Recommended: Heller (1990) "Temporal Parts and Four-Dimensional Objects" (ch. 25, secs. 1-3 & 9)
15. David Lewis (1986) "Counterparts or Double Lives?" (just pp. 198-200 of ch. 12)
16. Trenton Merricks (1994) "Endurance and Indiscernibility" (ch. 26)