

Phil 355: *Metaphysics*

Fall 2000

Class meeting time: T R 9:55-11:10 AM

Class location: Welles 131

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Telephone: 245-5231 (O)

Instructor: JeeLoo Liu

Office hours: M W 1- 3 PM

or by appointment

Office: Welles 103

- Texts:** 1. *Contemporary Reading in the Foundations of Metaphysics*, (eds.) Laurence & Macdonald, Blackwell Publishing. [L&M]
2. *Metaphysics: An Anthology*, (eds.) Kim & Sosa, Blackwell Publishing. [K&S]

Course Description: This course is designed as an introduction to contemporary metaphysics. The issues in metaphysics, such as what kinds of things exist and how they exist, began with ancient Greek philosophers. In this course we will take a look at how contemporary analytic philosophers deal with these same old issues.

- Course Objectives:**
1. Students will demonstrate general understanding of several key issues in contemporary metaphysics.
 2. Students will master the skills to write a philosophy paper that includes critical reasoning, sustained argumentation, and original insight.
 3. Students will demonstrate the ability to organize and present course materials in class.

Grading:

Mid-term exam	20 %
Final exam	20 %
6 Weekly homework (2 pages)	20 %
1 final paper (8-10 pages)	20 %
Presentation	10 %
Active class participation	10 %

General Policies:

1. To succeed in this course, you should keep pace with the syllabus. Your regular attendance is strongly emphasized, and you are also expected to finish the reading assignments prior to each class.
2. All written assignments must be typed, double-spaced, and free of spelling errors.
3. Homework must be handed in **on the assigned date** and **in person**. The class will be divided into two groups, one group writes 1-6 (due on Tuesdays); the other group writes 1'-6' (due on Thursdays). Each homework essay should comprise both an explanation and an evaluation of the author's view. Homework will be graded holistically. On the final day of the semester, hand in the whole set of homework in a folder. The grade of your homework will be based on your overall performance.
4. Preparation for the final paper is done in stages. During paper conferencing weeks (starting October 19), you should sign up for an appointment with me to discuss your paper topic. You should come prepared with your own paper topic. Following the conferencing session, you need to do some research to find relevant articles for your paper topic. A short annotated bibliography is due on November 14. By then you should have read these articles

and have a general idea about what they say. The first draft of your final paper is due on November 21. I will hand them back with comments for you to revise. The final paper is due on December 11 (the Monday after our last class). You need to hand in **two** copies of your final paper.

5. Presentation will begin in the second half of the semester. Each presentation takes about 30 minutes. Two students form a team to present the course material assigned for that day. Presentation gives students the chance to develop their ability to organize and present course materials.
6. To receive a final grade for the course, all assignments must be completed.

Class Schedule

<u>Date</u>	<u>Content of discussion</u>	<u>Assignments for this class</u>
T 8/29	Introduction	None
I. [Existence and Ontological Commitment]		
R 8/31	Peter van Inwagen: The Nature of Metaphysics	[L&M] pp. 11-21
T 9/5	Quine: On What There Is	[L&M] pp. 32-43
R 9/7	Carnap: Empiricism, Semantics, And Ontology	[K&S], pp. 13-21
T 9/12	Alston: Ontological Commitments	[L&M] pp. 46-53 Homework #1 due
R 9/14	Terence Parsons: Referring to Nonexistent Objects	[K&S], pp. 36-43 Homework #1' due
II. [Realism/Antirealism]		
T 9/19	Dummett: Realism and Anti-realism	[handouts] Homework #2 due
R 9/21	Dummett: Realism and Anti-realism [cont'd]	[handouts] Homework #2' due
T 9/26	Putnam: Pragmatic Realism	[K&S], pp. 591-606 Homework #3 due
R 9/28	Sosa: Putnam's Pragmatic Realism	[K&S], pp. 607-618 Homework #3' due
T 10/3	Alston: Yes, Virginia, There Is a Real World	[K&S], pp. 620-631 Homework #4 due
R 10/5	Wright: Realism, Antirealism, Irrealism, Quasi-realism	[K&S], pp. 649-663 Homework #4' due
T 10/10	Fall Break	
R 10/12	Review	Review all lecture notes

T 10/17 Mid-term Exam

III. [Possible Worlds]

- R 10/19** Lycan: Possible Worlds and Possibilia [L&M] pp. 83-94
[Sign up for a paper conferencing session with me.]
- T 10/24** Plantinga: Modalities: Basic Concepts and Distinctions [K&S] pp. 135-147
 [Paper Conferencing Week] **Homework #5 due**
- R 10/26** Lewis: Possible Worlds [L&M] pp. 96-101
 [Paper Conferencing Week] **Homework #5' due**
- T 10/31** Lewis: Counterparts or Double Lives? [K&S] pp. 154-169
 [Paper Conferencing Week] **Homework #6 due**
- R 11/2** Chisholm: Identity Through Possible Worlds [K&S] pp. 149-152
 [Paper Conferencing Week] **Homework #6' due**
- T 11/7** **Presentation of paper topics[One-page paper outline due]**

IV. [Universals, Properties, Kinds]

- R 11/9** Armstrong: Universals as Attributes [K&S] pp. 198-208
- T 11/14** Quine: Natural Kinds [K&S] pp. 233-241
[Annotated bibliography due]
- R 11/16** Putnam: On Properties [K&S] pp. 243-252
- T 11/21** Shoemaker: Causality and Properties [K&S] pp. 253-267
[Final paper, first draft due]
- R 11/23** **Thanksgiving Vacation**

V. [Causation]

- T 11/28** Mackie: Causes and Conditions [K&S] pp. 413-424
- R 11/30** Lewis: Causation [K&S] pp. 436-442
- T 12/5** Salmon: Causal Connections [K&S] pp. 444-456
- R 12/7** **Review; Conclusion** **[hand in the whole set of**

homework in a folder]

M 12/11 Final paper due [hand in two copies of your paper before noon]

FINAL EXAM: December 14 (Thursday) 8:00 - 11:00 AM