

## **Phil 355: *Metaphysics***

**Fall 2003**

**Class meeting time: T R 11:20am - 12:35pm**  
**Class location: Welles 132**  
**E-mail: Liu@geneseo.edu**  
**Telephone: 245-5231 (O)**

**Instructor: JeeLoo Liu**  
**Office hours: M W 10 - noon**  
**or by appointment**  
**Office: Welles 103**

### **Texts:**

- 1. Steven Hales. *Metaphysics: Contemporary Readings*. 1<sup>st</sup> edition. [Wadsworth]**
- 2. Peter Van Inwagen. *Ontology, Identity, and Modality: Essays in Metaphysics*. [Cambridge]**

### **Course Description:**

This course is designed to be 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. We will also study some issues that are the focus of contemporary metaphysics, such as the debate between realism and anti-realism, the theories of truth, and different theories of Mereology. Finally, we will continue the discussion of Mereology with Peter Van Inwagen's theory. The course will be conducted in lecture/discussion format.

- 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 insight. Students will also learn the basics of doing research in philosophy.
  3. Students will demonstrate the ability to organize and present course materials in class.

### **Grading:**

<b>Mid-term exam</b>	<b>20 %</b>
<b>Final exam</b>	<b>20 %</b>
<b>5 Weekly homework (3-4 pages)</b>	<b>20 %</b>
<b>1 final paper (8-10 pages)</b>	<b>20 %</b>
<b>Presentation</b>	<b>10 %</b>
<b>Active class participation</b>	<b>10 %</b>

### **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 1-5 (due on Tuesdays); the other group writes 1'-5' (due on Thursdays). Each homework essay should give detailed answers to the assigned "Review Questions" at the end of the article. Homework will be graded as a set. 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. All homework assignments will give hints on possible paper topics. During the paper conferencing week (11/17-11/20), you should meet with me during my office hours 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. You will give a five-minute topic presentation in the last week. Prepare a one-page handout containing the description of your paper topic. The final paper is due on December 9. 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.

**The College's Attendance Policy:****The Classroom Policies section of the Undergraduate Bulletin**

Students are expected to attend all classes. Furthermore, the College recognizes that students hold primary and ultimate responsibility for their academic performance and accomplishment. While attendance in itself is not a factor in the final grade for a course, students are expected to recognize the importance of regular class attendance and to complete satisfactorily all requirements of all courses in which they are registered.

Class Schedule

<u>Date</u>	<u>Content of discussion</u>	<u>Assignments for this class</u>
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T 8/26	Introduction	None
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**I. [Existence]**

R 8/28	Nicholas Rescher: On Explaining Existence	[Hales] pp. 7-26
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T 9/2	Derek Parfit: What Is Reality as It Is?	[Hales] pp. 26-32
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R 9/4	Robert Nozick: Why Is There Something Rather than Nothing?	[Hales] pp. 33-46
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**II. [Realism/Antirealism]**

<b>Add:</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>[Hales] pp. 47-51</b>
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T 9/9	Michael Dummett: Realism and Anti-Realism	[Hales] pp. 52-62 <b>Homework #1 due</b> <b>(Reading question #3)</b>
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R 9/11	Hilary Putnam: Why There Isn't a Ready-made World	[Hales] pp. 63-77 <b>Homework #1' due</b> <b>(Reading question #4)</b>
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T 9/16	Ernest Sosa: Putnam's Pragmatic Realism	[Hales] pp. 77-90 <b>Homework #2 due</b> <b>(Reading question #4)</b>
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R 9/18	Michael Devitt: A Naturalistic Defense of Realism	[Hales] pp. 90-104 <b>Homework #2' due</b> <b>(Reading question #4)</b>
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**III. [Truth]**

<b>T 9/23</b>	Frederick Schmitt: Introduction to Truth	[Hales] pp. 107-118. <b>No homework</b>
<b>R 9/25</b>	Alfred Tarski: The Semantic Conception of Truth and the Foundations of Semantics	[Hales] pp. 118-141 <b>No homework</b>
<b>T 9/30</b>	Alfred Tarski [cont'd]	[Hales] pp. 118-141 <b>Homework #3 due</b> <b>(Reading questions #4 &amp;5)</b>
<b>R 10/2</b>	Susan Haack: The Pragmatic Theory of Truth	[Hales] pp. 141-153 <b>Homework #3' due</b> <b>(Reading questions #3 &amp;4)</b>
<b>T 10/7</b>	Nicholas Rescher: Truth as Ideal Coherence	[Hales] pp. 153-159 <b>Homework #4 due</b> <b>(Reading questions #4 &amp;5)</b>
<b>R 10/9</b>	Paul Horwich: The Deflationary View of Truth	[Hales] pp. 160-175 <b>Homework #4' due</b> <b>(Reading questions #1 &amp;5)</b>
<b>T 10/14</b>	<b>Fall Break</b>	
<b>R 10/16</b>	Marian David: Truth as Correspondence	[Hales] pp. 176-195 <b>No homework</b>
<b>T 10/21</b>	<b>Review</b>	<b>Bring all lecture notes</b>
<b>R 10/23</b>	<b>Mid-term Exam</b>	

#### IV. [Mereology]

<b>T 10/28</b>	Peter Simons: Introduction to Mereology	[Hales] pp. 455-460 <b>No homework</b>
<b>R 10/30</b>	W. V. Quine: Identity, Ostension, and Hypostasis	[Hales] pp. 461-468 <b>No homework</b>
<b>T 11/4</b>	Mark Heller: Temporal Parts of Four-Dimensional Objects	[Hales] pp. 468-475 <b>Homework #5 due</b> <b>(Reading questions #1 &amp;4)</b>

- R 11/6** Peter van Inwagen: [Hales] pp. 476-482  
Four-Dimensional Objects **Homework #5' due**  
**(Reading questions #1 &2)**
- T 11/11** James van Cleve: [Hales] pp. 482-494  
Mereological Essentialism, Mereological  
Conjunctivism, and Identity through Time
- R 11/13** Ted Sider: [handouts]  
Four Dimensionalism (*The Philosophical Review* 106 (1997): 197-231)

**V. [*Ontology, Identity and Modality:*  
Peter van Inwagen's Essays in Metaphysics]**

- T 11/18** Peter van Inwagen: [van Inwagen] pp. 75-94  
The Doctrine of Arbitrary Undetached Parts  
**[Paper Conferencing Week]**
- R 11/20** Peter van Inwagen: [van Inwagen] pp. 122-143  
Temporal Parts and Identity across Time
- T 11/25** Peter van Inwagen: [van Inwagen] pp. 144-161  
Materialism and the Psychological-continuity  
Account of Personal Identity
- R 11/27** **Thanksgiving Vacation**
- T 12/2** **[Paper Topics Presentation]**
- R 12/4** **Review** **[Hand in the whole set of  
homework in a folder]**
- T 12/9** **Final paper due at noon**  
**[hand in two copies of your paper]**

**FINAL EXAM: December 11 (Thursday) 12:00 - 3:00 PM**