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:


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:
### Mid-term exam

20 %

Final exam 20 %

5 Weekly homework (3-4 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 1-5 (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

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Content of discussion</th>
<th>Assignments for this class</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T 8/26</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>None</td>
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**I. [Existence]**

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Content of discussion</th>
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<tr>
<td>R 8/28</td>
<td>Nicholas Rescher: On Explaining Existence</td>
<td>[Hales] pp. 7-26</td>
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**II. [Realism/Antirealism]**

Add: **Introduction** [Hales] pp. 47-51

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Content of discussion</th>
<th>Assignments for this class</th>
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<tr>
<td>T 9/9</td>
<td>Michael Dummett: Realism and Anti-Realism</td>
<td>[Hales] pp. 52-62</td>
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<td><strong>Homework #1 due</strong> (Reading question #3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>R 9/11</td>
<td>Hilary Putnam: Why There Isn’t a Ready-made World</td>
<td>[Hales] pp. 63-77</td>
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<td><strong>Homework #1' due</strong> (Reading question #4)</td>
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<td>T 9/16</td>
<td>Ernest Sosa: Putnam’s Pragmatic Realism</td>
<td>[Hales] pp. 77-90</td>
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<td><strong>Homework #2 due</strong> (Reading question #4)</td>
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<td><strong>Homework #2' due</strong> (Reading question #4)</td>
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**III. [Truth]**
T 9/23  Frederick Schmitt: Introduction to Truth
[Hales] pp. 107-118. No homework

[Hales] pp. 118-141 No homework

T 9/30  Alfred Tarski [cont’d]
[Hales] pp. 118-141 Homework #3 due
(Reading questions #4 &5)

R 10/2   Susan Haack: The Pragmatic Theory of Truth
[Hales] pp. 141-153 Homework #3' due
(Reading questions #3 &4)

T 10/7   Nicholas Rescher: Truth as Ideal Coherence
[Hales] pp. 153-159 Homework #4 due
(Reading questions #4 &5)

R 10/9   Paul Horwich: The Deflationary View of Truth
[Hales] pp. 160-175 Homework #4' due
(Reading questions #1 &5)

T 10/14  Fall Break

R 10/16  Marian David: Truth as Correspondence
[Hales] pp. 176-195 No homework

T 10/21  Review Bring all lecture notes

R 10/23  Mid-term Exam

IV. [Mereology]

T 10/28  Peter Simons: Introduction to Mereology
[Hales] pp. 455-460 No homework

R 10/30  W. V. Quine: Identity, Ostension, and Hypostasis
[Hales] pp. 461-468 No homework

T 11/4   Mark Heller: Temporal Parts of Four-Dimensional Objects
[Hales] pp. 468-475 Homework #5 due
(Reading questions #1 &4)
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