

PHILOS 125: Metaphysics

Spring 2019
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Office Hours: Thursday 9:30-11:30, Moses 310

Classes:

- 2 lectures each week: Tu/Th, 12:30-2pm, Barrows 56
- 1 section each week.

Materials:

- No books required! All readings will be made available on the bCourses course site.
- Students will need access to argument mapping software by Rationale. Go to <https://www.rationaleonline.com>, create an account with your Berkeley email address, and purchase an “Education Basic” or “Education Extra” subscription. PHIL 125 students receive a discounted rate of \$19 for Basic and \$25 for Extra. You will receive an email from me with the code for this discount.

Assessment:

- Levels system: 50%
- Final paper: 35%
- Class participation: 15%

Academic Integrity:

- Plagiarism is not tolerated and will be taken extremely seriously. “Turnitin” software will be used to check all assignments for possible plagiarism.
- That said, I strongly encourage you to discuss the material in this class with other students. It is fine to get feedback from other students on drafts of papers or argument maps. However, your finished work should then be your own work. This means that having talked about your draft with friends, you should sit down and revise your work yourself. The other student should not re-write anything for you.
- Please see the UC Berkeley statement on academic integrity: <http://sa.berkeley.edu/conduct/integrity>.

Classroom climate:

Discussion is an essential part of productive philosophical inquiry. All discussion in this class must be conducted in a collegial and respectful manner. This includes discussions in class, in tutorials, and online. Participation in a discussion can take many forms — you can add support to an idea, clarify it, distinguish it from related ideas, or disagree with it and challenge it. But however you choose to participate, the discussion must be conducted with respect and civility. This is not always easy. There may be times when someone expresses an idea that strikes you as immoral, repugnant, or deeply offensive. If you wish to challenge the idea, be sure to target the idea itself rather than the person who expressed it. It is never appropriate to demean or denigrate fellow students and instructors. In addition, all students are expected to comply with the Student Code of Conduct: <https://sa.berkeley.edu/code-of-conduct>

Policy on Sexual Violence and Harassment:

Sexual violence and sexual harassment have no place in a learning environment. Therefore, in alignment with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, it is the policy of the University of California to prohibit sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic/dating violence, and stalking. The UC Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment Policy requires that the University immediately implement interim remedies and permanent support measures, when necessary, for victims/survivors. If you or someone you know experiences sexual violence or harassment, there are options, rights, and resources, including assistance with academics, reporting, and medical care. Visit survivorsupport.berkeley.edu or call the 24/7 Care Line at [510-643-2005](tel:510-643-2005).

Course Overview:

Metaphysics is sometimes said to be the study of three questions: Why does the world exist? What does it contain? What is the place of human beings in the world? We will address all three questions. We'll start with the first question, of why the world exists, focusing on whether there could be such a thing as a *scientific* answer to this question. We'll then move on to second question, of what the world contains. At a very high level of generality, one might say that the world contains *matter*, distributed throughout *space*, and changing over *time*. We'll examine these three components of the world—space, time, and matter—in some detail. In the course of this we'll look at the relation between human beings and the material world. Can one survive without one's body? Could one upload one's mind onto a computer system and “live” online? If so, could a “simulated reality” be counted as *real*, or would it be just mere appearance? If the latter, in what sense is the world as represented by our ordinary human senses any different?

Readings:

- Readings marked ** are optional; all others are required.
- All readings will be available in PDF format through the bCourses site.
- You are expected to complete all readings assigned to each class by the time that class begins.
- If you find the readings difficult, that's fine—indeed this is expected! But please try to get through the reading before class begins. Try to formulate what you don't understand as a succinct question. We will discuss the readings in class and there will be an opportunity to ask questions.

Topic 1: Why are we here?

Tues 22 Jan
Class 1

Introduction to argument mapping

- Dasgupta, “A Brief Guide to Argument Mapping”

Thurs 24 Jan
Class 2

Why is there something rather than nothing?

- Clarke, “A Modern Formulation of the Cosmological Argument”
- Albert, “On the Origin of Everything”

Tues 29 Jan
Class 3

Evidence of design I: Biological complexity

- Sober, “Creationism”

Thurs 31 Jan

NO CLASS

Tues 5 Feb
Class 4

Evidence of design II: Fine tuning

- Collins, “God, Design, and Fine-Tuning”, pp. 120-126; pp. 131-134.
- Sober, “The Design Argument”, pp. 133-141.

Topic 2: Space

Thurs 7 Feb
Class 5

Space in classical physics I: The bucket argument

- Dasgupta, “Substantivalism vs Relationalism About Space in Classical Physics”, sections 1-3.

Tues 12 Feb
Class 6

Space in classical physics II: Symmetry arguments

- Dasgupta, “Substantivalism vs Relationalism About Space in Classical Physics”, sections 4-6.

Thurs 14 Feb
Class 7

Special relativity

- Maudlin, *Philosophy of Physics: Space and Time*, chapter 4: “Special Relativity”

Tues 19 Feb

NO CLASS

Thurs 21 Feb
Class 8

General relativity

- Maudlin, *Philosophy of Physics: Space and Time*, chapter 6: “General Relativity”

Topic 3: Appearance and Reality

Tues 26 Feb
Class 9

Conventionalism about geometry

- Reichenbach, *The Philosophy of Space and Time*, chapter 1; pp. 10-19 and 35-37.
- Sklar, *Space, Time, and Spacetime*, chapter 2, “The Epistemology of Geometry”, pp. 79-87.

Thurs 28 Feb
Class 10

Realism

- Sider, *Writing the Book of the World*, Chapter 1, “Structure”
- Sider, *Writing the Book of the World*, Chapter 3, “Connections”, pp. 38-43.

Tues 5 March
Class 11

Anti-realism

- Thomasson, “Metaphysics and Conceptual Negotiation”

Thurs 7 March
Class 12

The simulation argument

- Bostrom, “Are You Living in a Computer Simulation?”

Tues 12 March
Class 13

Simulation and reality

- Chalmers, “The Matrix as Metaphysics”

Topic 4: Time and Persistence

Thurs 14 March

NO CLASS

Tues 19 March
Class 14

Time I: Tense

- Sider, *Four-Dimensionalism*, chapter 1 “Against Presentism”, pp. 11-18.

Thurs 21 March
Class 15

Time II: Against serious tense

- Sider, *Four-Dimensionalism*, chapter 1 “Against Presentism”, pp. 25-52.

Tues 26 March

SPRING BREAK

Thurs 28 March

SPRING BREAK

Tues 2 April
Class 16

Time III: Taking tense seriously

- Sider, *Four-Dimensionalism*, chapter 1 “Against Presentism”, pp. 18-21.
- Zimmerman, “The Privileged Present”

Thurs 4 April
Class 17

Persistence I: Puzzles of persistence

- Sider, *Four-Dimensionalism*, Chapter 3: “Three- and Four-Dimensionalism Stated”
- Sider, “Temporal Parts” pp. 247-257.

Tues 9 April
Class 18

Persistence II: Perdurance

- Sider, *Four-Dimensionalism*, Chapter 4: “In Favor of Four-Dimensionalism, Part I”, pp. 120-140.

Thurs 11 April
Class 19

Persistence III: Endurance and hylomorphism

- Koslicki, *The Structure of Objects*, Chapter 4: “A Different Kind of Whole”

Topic 5: Personal Identity

Tues 16 April
Class 20

Persons I

- Thomson, “People and Their Bodies”

Thurs 18 April

NO CLASS

Tues 23 April
Class 21

Persons II

- Williams, “The Self and the Future”

Thurs 25 April
Class 22

Survival and identity I

- Parfit, “Personal Identity”

Tues 30 April
Class 23

Survival and identity II

- Lewis, “Survival and Identity”

Thurs 2 May
Class 24

Survival and identity III

- Johnston, “The Personite Problem: Should Practical Reason be Tabled?”