

# 4AANA004 METAPHYSICS

Syllabus – Academic year 2014/15

## Basic information

**Credits:** 15

**Module Tutor:** Bill Brewer

**Office:** 802

**Consultation time:** Wednesday 12-1

**Semester:** Second

**Lecture time and venue\*:** Tuesday, 11-12, Edmond J Safra Theatre

*\*Please note that tutorial times and venues will be organised independently with your teaching tutor*

## Module description (plus aims and objectives)

Metaphysics is the study of the fundamental nature of reality. The course begins with a consideration of the nature of persisting material objects and their parts. Then we turn to a discussion of persons and their identity over time. Next we consider the properties of material objects, and in particular the distinction between primary and secondary qualities. Finally we address questions of the nature and substance of metaphysical questions themselves.

### Aims

The Metaphysics module aims to give students the intellectual equipment to investigate for themselves the issues mentioned in the module description above on the basis of careful reading and critical reflection upon the key writings in the area.

### Objectives

By the end of the module, students will be able to demonstrate intellectual, transferable, and practicable skills appropriate to a level 4 module and in particular they will have

- developed a capacity for philosophical argument concerning central metaphysical topics
- acquired a knowledge of some of the key philosophical writings concerning these topics
- understood the nature of some of the central problems in metaphysics
- encountered and evaluated a number of attempts to solve the philosophical problems under discussion
- acquired an understanding of how problems in metaphysics relate to broader philosophical debates in areas of logic, epistemology, philosophy of mind, and ethics
- acquired an ability to relate the questions discussed to the work of philosophers studied in other modules
- been encouraged to read with great care and reflect upon some difficult texts as well as introductory and secondary material

## Assessment methods and deadlines

- *Formative assessment:*  
2 x 1,000-word essays, due by 1600 on ? Nov and ? Dec respectively. Formative essays must be completed by the deadline in order to receive feedback. This feedback is crucial for your summative assessment
- *Summative assessment:*  
One two-hour exam (100%)

## Outline of lecture topics (plus suggested readings)

Course Text: J. Kim et al. (eds.), Metaphysics, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edn. Students must have access to a copy of this text. Numbers following 'Kim et al.' below indicate readings from this collection. Additional readings will be available on KEATS.

**Week One** Intro and temporary intrinsics

Suggested reading:

- Kim et al: 37, 38

**Week Two** Parts

Suggested reading:

- Kim et al: 35, 36

**Week Three** Nihilism

Suggested reading:

- Kim et al: 47
- Sider, 'Against Parthood', <http://tedsider.org/papers/nihilism.pdf>

**Week Four** Sortalism

Suggested reading:

- Wiggins, Sameness and Substance, chs. 2 & 3
- Ayers, 'Individuals Without Sortals'

**Week Five** Naturalism and the problem of the many

Suggested reading:

- Ayers, Locke, II, chs. 17-21
- Unger, 'The Problem of the Many'
- Kim et al: 48
- Jones, 'Multiple Constitution', <https://sites.google.com/site/nickjonesphilosophy/Research>

READING WEEK – NB FIRST FORMATIVE ESSAY DUE – 1600, FRI 31 OCT

**Week Six** Personal identity

Suggested reading:

- Kim et al: 41, 42, 43

**Week Seven** Personal identity contd

Suggested reading:

- Kim et al: 46
- Ayers, Locke, II, ch. 25

**Week Eight** Primary and secondary qualities

Suggested reading:

- Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, II.viii
- Mackie, Problems from Locke, ch. 1
- McGinn, The Subjective View, pp. 5-15

**Week Nine** Primary and secondary qualities contd

Suggested reading:

- Evans, 'Things Without the Mind', pt. III
- Campbell, 'A Simple View of Colour'

**Week Ten** Metametaphysics

Suggested reading:

- Kim et al: 5, 7
- Fine, 'The Question of Ontology'
- Schaffer, 'Monism: the priority of the whole', <http://www.jonathanschaffer.org/monism.pdf>

NB SECOND FORMATIVE ESSAY DUE – 1600, FRI 12 DEC

Outline of lecture topics (plus suggested readings) – continued if necessary



## Suggested essay questions

1. Assess Lewis' argument from temporary intrinsics for a perdurance conception of the persistence of physical objects.
2. Can the endurance theorist allow that physical objects may survive the loss of a spatial part?
3. Are there any conditions under which two physical objects may occupy the same place at the same time?
4. Are persons essentially persons?
5. Is there any interesting distinction between primary and secondary qualities?
6. What kind of disagreements are the disagreements between rival metaphysical theories?

## Suggested additional readings



