

4AANA004 Metaphysics I

Syllabus – Academic year 2015/16

Basic information

Credits: 15

Module Tutor: Robyn Repko Waller

Office: 707 Philosophy Building

Consultation time: Wednesdays 10:00-11:00; Thursdays 14:00-15:00

Semester: 1

Lecture time and venue*: Thursdays 13:00-14:00; Strand Building S2.18

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

Module description (plus aims and objectives)

Metaphysics concerns the basic features of reality, covering topics such as personal identity, free will, causation and laws of nature, the nature of time, and material constitution. This course will provide students with a survey of some of the main issues in metaphysics. An emphasis will be placed on critical examination of arguments for and against competing views. Students will have the opportunity to examine and develop their own positions on these issues.

Some sample questions we will tackle:

- 1) What are we? What does it take for a person to persist over time?
- 2) How is a statue related to the lump of clay out of which it is formed?
- 3) What is the nature of time? What is time travel?
- 4) What are laws of nature? Suppose 165 million cups of tea were consumed yesterday in the UK. Why is it taken that the speed of light is a law of nature but the fact that 165 million cups of tea were consumed yesterday in the UK is not?
- 5) Do we ever act freely? Can manipulated agents act freely? When does luck undermine free will and moral responsibility?

Course Objectives:

- 1) To provide students with an introduction to some of the contemporary debates in metaphysics and the interplay of these philosophical debates with work in related academic disciplines.
- 2) To provide students with an understanding of the nature and methods of philosophical theorizing, including the criteria by which arguments in metaphysics and related philosophy subfields are to be assessed.
- 3) To foster students' abilities to think critically, analyse complex problems, evaluate arguments, and argue cogently for their own views both about metaphysics and philosophical topics more generally.

Assessment methods and deadlines

- **Formative assessment:** two x 1000 word essays
First essay due: 16:00 on Friday 26 February 2016
Second essay due: 16:00 on Friday 08 April 2016
- **Summative assessment:** one x two-hour exam in May/June (100%)
All summative BA coursework is due: 12:00 (NOON) on Thursday 19 May 2016

NB Please note that for semester I-only Study Abroad students, assessment requirements may vary. In particular, May exams will be replaced by summative essays to be submitted by the end of term (date TBC)

Books cited below

Conee, E., and Sider, T. 2014. *Riddles of Existence: A Guided Tour of Metaphysics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Mele, A. R. 2014. *A Dialogue on Free Will and Science*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Outline of lecture topics (plus suggested readings)

Week One: Personal Identity

Required reading:

- (i) Conee and Sider, Ch. 1, Personal Identity, *Riddles of Existence*
- (ii) Dennett, D. C. 1981. Where Am I?. In Dennett, D. C., and Hofstadter, D. (eds.), *The Mind's I*. New York: Basic Books. (also available as a PDF online)

Week Two: Personal Identity

Required reading:

- (i) Parfit, D. 1971. Personal Identity. *The Philosophical Review*, 3-27.
- (ii) Olson, E. T. 2007. Animals. In *What are We?: A Study in Personal Ontology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Week Three: Material Constitution

Required reading:

- (i) Conee and Sider, Ch. 7, Constitution, *Riddles of Existence*
- (ii) Wiggins, D. 1968. On Being in the Same Place at the Same Time. *The Philosophical Review*, 90-95.

Week Four: Material Constitution

Required reading:

- (i) Sider, T. 1997. Four Dimensionalism. *The Philosophical Review*, 106, 197-231.
- (ii) Unger, P. 1979. There are no Ordinary Things, *Synthese*, 41, 117-154.

Week Five: The Nature of Time

Required reading:

- (i) Conee and Sider, Ch. 3, Time, *Riddles of Existence*
- (ii) Prior, A. N., 1970. The Notion of the Present. *Stadium Generale*, 23, 245-248.
- (iii) Prior, A. N. 1968. Changes in Events and Changes in Things. In A. Prior, *Papers on Time and Tense*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

READING WEEK – NB FIRST FORMATIVE ESSAY DUE FRIDAY 26 FEBRUARY 2016

Week Six: The Nature of Time

Required reading:

- (i) Williams, D. C. 1951. The Myth of Passage. *Journal of Philosophy*, 48, 457-472.
- (ii) Lewis, D. 1976. The Paradoxes of Time Travel. *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 145-152.

Week Seven: Causation and Laws of Nature

Required reading:

- (i) Conee and Sider, Ch. 9, Possibility and Necessity, *Riddles of Existence*
- (ii) Hume, D. Constant Conjunction. Excerpt from *A Treatise of Human Nature*.

Week Eight: Causation and Laws of Nature

Required reading:

- (i) Dretske, F., 1977. Laws of Nature. *Philosophy of Science*, 44, 248-268.
- (ii) Excerpt from Anscombe, G. E. M. 1971. *Causality and Determination: An Inaugural Lecture*. CUP Archive.

Week Nine: Free Will

Required reading:

- (i) Mele, Ch. 1-3, *A Dialogue on Free Will and Science*

Week Ten: Free Will

Required reading:

- Mele, Ch. 4-5, *A Dialogue on Free Will and Science*

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

Suggested essay questions

Weeks 1 and 2

- (i) Explain and evaluate one objection to the psychological continuity view.
- (ii) What is animalism? Explain and evaluate one objection to the view.

Weeks 3 and 4

- (iii) Explain the conditions, if any, under which two physical objects may occupy the same place at the same time.
- (iv) What are temporal parts? How can one explain the relationship between the statue and lump of clay by using the temporal parts (or four-dimensionalist) theory?

Weeks 5 and 6

- (v) Explain the problem raised by the idea that time flows, and explain and evaluate Prior's proposed solution.
- (vi) Explain how, according to Lewis, the character Tim (in Lewis's time-travel story) in one sense can and in another sense can't kill his grandfather.

Weeks 7 and 8

- (vii) According to Hume, how do we get the idea of necessary connection?
- (viii) Explain what, according to Anscombe, is the core feature of causation.

Weeks 9 and 10

- (ix) What is compatibilism about free will and determinism? Explain and evaluate one argument against compatibilism.
- (x) What is incompatibilism about free will and determinism? Explain and evaluate one argument against incompatibilism.

Suggested additional readings

Week 1 and 2

- (i) For a general overview of the issues discussed in this course, see Conee, E., and Sider, T. 2014. *Riddles of Existence: A Guided Tour of Metaphysics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Lowe, E. J. 2002. *A Survey of Metaphysics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- (ii) For excellent anthologies of readings in Metaphysics, see van Inwagen, P., and Zimmerman, D. W. 2008. *Metaphysics: The Big Questions*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing; Kim, J., Korman, D. Z., and Sosa, E. 2012. *Metaphysics: An Anthology*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- (iii) Locke, J., 1975. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. P. Nidditch, Oxford: Clarendon Press (original work, 2nd ed., first published 1694).
- (iv) Olson, E. T. 2007. *What are we?: A Study in Personal Ontology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- (v) Shoemaker, S., and Swinburne, S. 1984. *Personal Identity: Great Debates in Philosophy*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- (vi) Noonan, H. 2011. The Complex and Simple Views of Personal Identity. *Analysis*, 71(1), 72-77.
- (vii) van Inwagen, P. 1990. *Material Beings*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- (viii) Lewis, D. 1976. Survival and Identity. In A. Rorty (ed.), *The Identities of Persons*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. (see also in weeks 3 and 4)
- (ix) Wiggins, D. 1980. *Sameness and Substance*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Week 3 and 4

- (i) Geach, P. 1967. Identity. *Review of Metaphysics*, 21, 3–12.
- (ii) Unger, P. 1979. There are no Ordinary Things. *Synthese*, 41, 117–154.
- (iii) van Inwagen, P. 1990. *Material Beings*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- (iv) Burke, M. 1994 Preserving the Principle of One Object to a Place: A Novel Account of the Relations among Objects, Sorts, Sortals and Persistence Conditions. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 54, 591–624.
- (v) Merricks, T. 2001. *Objects and Persons*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Week 5 and 6

- (i) Prior, A. N. 1996. Some Free Thinking about Time. In Copeland, B. J. (ed.), *Logic and Reality: Essays on the Legacy of Arthur Prior*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 47-51.
- (ii) Zimmerman, D. 2005. The A-theory of Time, the B-theory of Time, and 'Taking Tense Seriously.' *Dialectica*, 59, 401–457.
- (iii) Smart, J.J.C. 1963. The Space-Time World. Excerpt from *Philosophy and Scientific Realism*. London: RKP.
- (iv) The section on tense in Quine, W. V. O. 1960. *Word and Object*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Week 7 and 8

- (i) Russell, B. 1912. On the Notion of Cause. orig. In Slater, J., (ed.), *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell v6: Logical and Philosophical Papers 1909–1913*. London: Routledge Press.
- (ii) Stebbing, L. S. 1933. Causality. In *A Modern Introduction to Logic, 2nd edition*. London: Methuen.
- (iii) Armstrong, D. M. 1989. *Universals: An Opinionated Introduction*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- (iv) Mackie, J. L. 1965. Causes and Conditions. *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 2, 245–264.
- (v) Lewis, D., 1973. Causation. *Journal of Philosophy*, 70, 556–567.

Week 9 and 10

- (i) For a good introduction to the topic of free will, see J. M. Fischer, J. M., R. Kane, D. Pereboom, & M. Vargas, (Eds.), *Four Views on Free Will*. Oxford: Blackwell.