

Metaphysics (PHIL 359)

Professor Baron Reed
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and by appointment

Spring Quarter, 2013
B-17 Fisk Hall
T/Th 11:00-12:20

Course Description:

There are various ways of characterizing metaphysics: the study of first causes, the study of being *qua* being, the study of the categories, the study of fundamental reality, etc. Depending on how one thinks of it, metaphysics can include everything from an account of universals to the examination of whether God exists. Our concern will mostly be with a somewhat narrow range of issues in ontology (the study of being): abstract entities, concrete entities, and how they relate to one another. We shall close by considering how the objects studied by metaphysics are related to our beliefs about them.

Required Texts:

Loux, Michael. 2006. *Metaphysics*, 3rd. ed. New York: Routledge.
Sider, Theodore; Hawthorne, John; and Zimmerman, Dean (eds.). 2008. *Contemporary Debates in Metaphysics*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Required Work:

Work for the course will include daily reading reports and two papers:

20% Reading Reports
30% First paper (5 pages)
40% Second paper (7 pages)

Excellent class participation may also factor into the final grade.

Reading Reports:

The reading assignments must be read *before* class on the day they are listed. You will answer the assigned question and turn it in at the beginning of class. Each answer should be no more than one page (double-spaced, normal font, etc.). The questions are meant to get you thinking about at least one of the most important issues to be discussed in that day's lecture. The reports will be graded on a 5-point scale:

5 = excellent (high A)
4 = very good (A-/B+)
3 = somewhat good (B-)
2 = not good (C)
1 = not good at all (D)
0 = now that you have mastered writing your name on a piece of paper, let's try this again (F)

*You may drop your two lowest scores, including instances in which you did not turn one in.

Course Policies:

- (1) Computers and other electronic devices must be off during class time.
- (2) In order to pass the course, all assignments must be completed.*
- (3) Extensions must be requested before the due date.
- (4) I reserve the right to institute an attendance policy.
- (5) ***Very Important:*** plagiarism will not be tolerated. All cases of alleged violation of academic integrity will be referred to the Assistant Dean for Advising and Academic Integrity. Possible penalties range from failing the course to permanent exclusion from the university. For more on plagiarism, see:
<http://www.weinberg.northwestern.edu/advising/integrity/index.html> and
<http://www.northwestern.edu/provost/students/integrity/plagiarism.html>.

Students with Disabilities:

Any student with a documented disability needing accommodations is requested to speak directly to the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) (847-467-5530) and the instructor, as early as possible in the quarter (preferably within the first two weeks of class). All discussions will remain confidential.

Blackboard:

Much of the business of this course will be conducted through the Course Management System (Blackboard). You are encouraged to check it frequently, as I may post announcements there. To access Blackboard, you will need to use your NetID and password. The web address for Blackboard is: <http://www.it.northwestern.edu/education/course-management/>.

Schedule of Readings:

- Apr. 4 Introduction: the nature of metaphysics [recommended: Loux, Introduction]
- Apr. 9 “Abstract Entities,” Chris Swoyer
- Apr. 11 “There Are No Abstract Objects,” Cian Dorr
- Apr. 16 Universals I: metaphysical realism, Loux, ch. 1
- Apr. 18 Universals II: nominalism, Loux, ch. 2
- Apr. 23 Concrete particulars, Loux, ch. 3
- Apr. 25 “The Privileged Present: Defining an ‘A-Theory’ of Time,” Dean Zimmerman; “The Tenseless Theory of Time,” J.J.C. Smart [recommended: Loux, ch. 7]
- Apr. 30 “Temporal Parts,” Ted Sider [recommended: Loux, ch. 8]
- May 2 “Three-Dimensionalism vs. Four-Dimensionalism,” John Hawthorne [recommended: Loux, ch. 8]
- First Paper Due (but no reading report)**

May 7 “Nailed to Hume’s Cross?” John Carroll [recommended: Loux, ch. 6]

May 9 “Causation and Laws of Nature: Reductionism,” Jonathan Schaffer

May 14 Modality, Loux, ch. 5, pp. 153-166

May 16 Modality, Loux, ch. 5, pp. 166-186

[recommended: “David Lewis: *On the Plurality of Worlds*,” Phillip Bricker (Blackboard); “Concrete Possible Worlds,” Phillip Bricker; “Ersatz Possible Worlds,” Joseph Melia]

*May 21 Propositions, Loux, ch. 4 (pp. 121-42)

*May 23 “The Moon and Sixpence: A Defense of Mereological Universalism,” James Van Cleve

May 28 “Restricted Composition,” Ned Markosian

May 30 *Writing the Book of the World*, ch. 1-2, Ted Sider

[recommended: “Ontological Arguments: Interpretive Charity and Quantifier Variance,” Eli Hirsch]

*June 4 No class

June 5 Reading period begins

June 12 **Final Paper Due (5 PM)**