



## METAPHYSICS – PHIL 320

FALL 2013  
MYBK 206  
MW 3:25-4:40

Professor Christian Coseru  
Office: 4B Glebe Street, # 205  
Office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 3-5 p.m., and by appointment  
Office Phone: 943-1935  
Email: [coseruc@cofc.edu](mailto:coseruc@cofc.edu)

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

What are the different categories of existing (and possible) things? What kinds of relations exist between these things? What is a person, and what are the constitutive elements of personal identity? What is the nature of causality and agency? What is time and how does it relate to temporal experience? These questions belong in the domain of metaphysics – a branch of philosophy that is concerned with the nature of reality. Metaphysics considers, among others, such basic concepts as *existence, causation, possibility, and identity*. In this course we will focus primarily on certain core questions about *personal identity*. We will also explore the impact of science on traditional metaphysics and consider how the kinds of questions that are asked in metaphysics relate to questions in other areas of philosophy (such as ethics and philosophy of mind).

### REQUIRED TEXT

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|---|------|
| Crane, T. & Katalin Farkas, <i>Metaphysics: A Guide and Anthology</i> , Oxford (OUP 2004) | M    |
| Ross, D., Ladyman, J. & Kincaid, Harold, <i>Scientific Metaphysics</i> (OUP 2013)         | SM   |
| Additional readings   | OAKS |

You must bring the assigned text(s) to class. You are expected to read on average 40-50 pages a week.

### TENTATIVE READING ASSIGNMENTS

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| Aug 21        | Introduction: What is Metaphysics?<br><b>I. The Question of Being</b>  |
| Aug 26-28     | Aristotle, <i>Categories</i> (M 149-154); M. Heidegger, <i>Being and Time</i> (OAKS); W. V. O. Quine, "On What There Is" (M 179-193)<br><b>II. Universals and Particulars</b>  |
| Sep 2-4       | Plato, <i>Parmenides</i> and <i>Republic</i> (M: 227-234); D. M. Armstrong, <i>Universals: An Opinionated Introduction</i> (M: 235-248)  |
| Sep 9-11      | J. Ganeri, "Analytic Philosophy in Early Modern India, § 1, 10-11" ( <a href="http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/early-modern-india/">http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/early-modern-india/</a> ); S. Shoemaker, <i>Causality and Properties</i> (M: 273-295)<br><b>III. Causation</b>                      |
| Sep 16-18     | Aristotle, <i>Metaphysics</i> (M: 380-381); J. Ganeri, "Analytic Philosophy in Early Modern India, § 6" ( <a href="http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/early-modern-india/">http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/early-modern-india/</a> ); D. Hume, <i>Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding</i> (M: 382-389) |
| <b>Sep 18</b> | <b>FIRST PAPER DUE IN CLASS</b>  |

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
|               | <b>IV. Time and Space</b>  |
| Sep 23-25     | P. Horwich, <i>Asymmetries in Time</i> (M: 474-485); The Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence (M: 486-495); Smart, "The Space-Time World" (M: 496-509)  |
| Sep 30–Oct 2  | D. Lewis, "The Paradoxes of Time Travel" (M: 510-521); L. A. Paul, "Temporal Experience" (OAKS)  |
|               | <b>V. Mind, Body, and Personal Identity</b>  |
| Oct 7-9       | R. Descartes, <i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i> (M: 273-295); D. Davidson, <i>Thinking Causes</i> (M: 639-647)  |
| <b>Oct 14</b> | <b>FALL BREAK</b>  |
| Oct 16        | T. Nagel, "What Is It Like to Be A Bat?" (M: 648-658)  |
| Oct 21-23     | D. Parfit, Personal Identity (M: 560-577); C. Coseru, "Mind in Indian Buddhist Philosophy, § 1, 3-5" ( <a href="http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/mind-indian-buddhism/">http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/mind-indian-buddhism/</a> ) |
| <b>Oct 28</b> | <b>SECOND PAPER DUE IN CLASS</b>   |
| Oct 28-30     | M. Siderits, <i>Personal Identity and Buddhist Philosophy</i> , Ch. 3 (OAKS); J. Ganeri, <i>The Self: Naturalism, Consciousness, and the First Person Stance</i> , Chs. 3-4 (OAKS)   |
|               | <b>VI. Metaphysics and Naturalism</b>  |
| Nov 4         | A. Chakravartty, "On the Prospects of Naturalized Metaphysics" (SM: 27-50)   |
| <b>Nov 6</b>  | <b>Chicago Talk (no class)</b>   |
| Nov 11-13     | A. Melnyk, "Can Metaphysics be Naturalized? And If So, How?" (SM: 79-95);  |
| Nov 18-20     | D. Dennett, "Kinds of Things-Towards a Bestiary of the Manifest Image" (SM: 96-107); J. Ladyman & D. Ross, "The World in the Data" (SM: 108-150)   |
|               | <b>VIII. Freedom and Determinism</b>   |
| Nov 25        | J. Ismael, "Causation, Free Will, and Naturalism" (SM: 208-236)  |
| Dec 2         | D. Chalmers, <i>The Matrix as Metaphysics</i> ( <a href="http://consc.net/papers/matrix.html">consc.net/papers/matrix.html</a> )   |
| <b>Dec 6</b>  | <b>FINAL EXAM (12:00 - 3:00 p.m.)</b>  |

**ASSIGNMENTS AND PERCENTAGES:** two papers (30% each), final exam (30%), participation (10%).

*First Two Papers* (30%). I will provide a list of topics for your first two essays. The papers should be around 2,500 words or 10 pages (double space).

*Final Exam* (30%). The final exam will consist in a take home essay (7-8 pages) and in-class short essay questions. The exam is cumulative and questions will be drawn from all the material covered in this course.

**You must bring the assigned text to class.**

**Grading Scale:** Letter (or numerical) grades will be assigned as follows: A+ (97-100), **A (93-96)**, A- (90-92), B+ (87-89), **B (83-86)**, B- (80-82), C+ (77-79), **C (73-76)**, C- (70-72), D+ (67-69), **D (63-66)**, D- (60-62), **F (59 or lower)**.

**Attendance:** It is essential that you attend classes! More than three unexcused absences will adversely affect your grade and may result in your dismissal from the class.

**Honor Code:** Lying, cheating, and plagiarism are violations of the Honor Code and are not permitted at the College. Cases of suspected academic dishonesty will be reported directly to the Dean of Students. A student suspected for academic dishonesty will receive a XF in the course, indicating failure based on dishonesty.

**Assignments policy:** You must complete all assignments in order to obtain a final grade for this course. Failure to take the final exam will result in a grade of F for the entire course. Late (or early) exams will only be arranged if you can show that a real emergency prevents you from taking the exam on the due date.

**Disabilities:** Please let me know at the beginning of the semester if you require any type of special academic accommodation due to your disability. You must also provide a letter from the Center for Disability Services to that effect. Please inform me of any other special needs you may have. Information about the SNAP program can be found at: [disabilityservices.cofc.edu/](http://disabilityservices.cofc.edu/)

## Requirements

- It is essential that you attend class! **Four unexcused absences** will adversely affect your grade and may result in your dismissal from the class.
- If you fail to bring the assigned readings to class you will not be able to follow the lectures and the discussion. You are encouraged to annotate and add marginal comments to all texts discussed in class.
- Keep in mind that reading assignments in the syllabus are tentative. Expect changes throughout the semester. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to find out how far we have gotten in the current reading assignment.
- Exam and paper assignment due dates are clearly marked in the syllabus. Make sure to add them to your calendar. Missing the final exam will result in a grade of F.
- Late papers will only be accepted if you can show that a real emergency prevents you from turning the assignment on the due date.

## Expectations

- How well you do in this course will depend in large measure on how well you prepare yourself for each class. Read the entire assignment at least once, and mark any passage, concept, or idea that you have trouble understanding and bring it up in class. Coming to class unprepared, apart from annoying your colleagues, will also adversely affect your participation grade.
- This is an upper level course in a core area of philosophy, covering topics of wide academic and popular interest like the nature of time, causation, and personal identity. Being able to identify a particular philosophical claim or report a scientific finding is a useful step of the process. But you must also be prepared to explain it, argue for or against it, point out its strengths and weaknesses, the evidence on which it is based (if any), and its overall merit (or lack thereof). As a rule, make sure you come to class with at least one or two thoughtful questions from your readings.
- You will continuously learn new and unfamiliar concepts and theories. It is your responsibility to construct a glossary of all the technical terms with appropriate definitions and cross-references.
- Did you wonder about the cover image on this syllabus, about whether there might be a connection between metaphysics and art? Yes? Good (I mean, that is a good sign), for philosophy begins in wonder!

**Welcome to Metaphysics!**