

Metaphysics (Core Seminar)

Christian Wüthrich

Phil 205A, Winter 2013

Class schedule: Tu 2:00-4:50pm, HSS 7077 (Philosophy seminar room)
Website: <http://philosophy.ucsd.edu/faculty/wuthrich/>
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Metaphysics, it has been claimed, is the study of the most fundamental aspects of the structure of reality, and in this sense precedes empirical science. So what is metaphysics, and how does it relate to science? Before we conclude the course by considering its relation to science, we will discuss many questions that can be thought to delineate metaphysics. The topics to be covered (although there is some flexibility about this) include existence, identity and change, universals and particulars, modality, causation, space, time and persistence, freedom and determinism, and metaphysics and science.

This class will engage these topics with an emphasis on contemporary views and debates. Accordingly, our approach will be topic-oriented, rather than historical.

Prerequisites: Graduate standing or permission of the instructor.

Distribution requirements: This course can be counted towards the fulfillment of the distribution requirement in metaphysics.

Required texts

All mandatory (and perhaps some recommended) readings will be made available through e-reserves or online. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (<http://plato.stanford.edu/>) has many excellent background and survey papers. Go to the course web page for links.

Course requirements and evaluation

The following are necessary and jointly sufficient conditions to obtain letter grade credit for this seminar:

1. **Participation:** You are expected to attend all classes and to actively participate in discussions. If you have to miss a class, you must let me know in advance.
2. **Class presentations:** Every participant gives at least two presentations of no more than 15 minutes. You are expected to do something visual (blackboard, overheads, handout). Do not try to be comprehensive; rather, synthesize the important parts (main thesis, main argument) and offer some critical thoughts for discussion.

3. **Short papers:** Submit 5 short papers of 3 to 4 pages, reflecting readings for the meeting when the paper is submitted. I want to see a clear statement of the main thesis of the article you are discussing, a brief summary of the main argument, and *your independent judgment and critical reflection*.

or

Seminar paper: Submit a term paper of 15 to 20 pages or so, on a topic approved by me. Please submit a paragraph-long outline of your project by Tuesday, **5 March 2013**. The full paper is due on Thursday, **21 March 2013**.

Topics and readings

Please note that the topics listed do not map bijectively to meetings; the plan would to just go through them more or less in order. The reading list is tentative and may still change, in particular upon popular demand. In particular, I only expect us to cover a strict subset of this list. Talk to me if you would like to read some general background texts in metaphysics or read up on a particular topic.

(1) Existence

- Willard V O Quine, 'On what there is', *Review of Metaphysics* **2** (1948): 21-38.
- Terence Parsons, 'Referring to nonexistent objects', *Theory and Decision* **11** (1979): 95-110.

(2) Identity and change

- Max Black, 'The identity of indiscernibles', *Mind* **51**(1952): 153-164.
- Saul Kripke, 'Identity and necessity', in Milton K Munitz (ed.), *Identity and Individuation*, New York University Press (1971), 135-164.
- Roderick Chisholm, 'Identity through time', in his *Person and Object*, Open Court (1976), 89-113 (Ch. 3).

(3) Universals and particulars

- Bertrand Russell, 'The world of universals', in his *The Problems of Philosophy*, Clarendon (1912), 91-100 (Ch. 9).
- David Armstrong, 'Universals as attributes', in his *Universals*, Westview Press (1989), 75-112 (Ch. 5).
- D C Williams, 'The elements of being', *Review of Metaphysics* **7** (1953): 3-18.
- David Lewis, 'New work for a theory of universals', *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* **61** (1983): 343-377.

(4) Modality

- Alvin Plantinga, ‘Modalities: basic concepts and distinctions’, in his *The Nature of Necessity*, Clarendon Press (1974), 1-26 (Chs. 1 and 2).
- Roderick Chisholm, ‘Identity through possible worlds’, *Nous* **1** (1967): 1-8.
- David Lewis, ‘Counterparts or double lives’, in his *On the Plurality of Worlds*, Blackwell (1986), 192-263 (Ch. 4; read at least §§4.1-4.3).
- David Armstrong, ‘The nature of possibility’, *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* **16** (1986): 575-594.

(5) Causation

- David Hume, ‘Constant conjunction’, in his *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Book I, Part III, Sections ii and xiv, first published in 1739.
- J L Mackie, ‘Causes and conditions’, *American Philosophical Quarterly* **2** (1965): 245-264.
- David Lewis, ‘Causation’, *Journal of Philosophy* **70** (1973): 556-567.
- Wesley C Salmon, ‘Causal connections’, in his *Scientific Explanation and the Causal Structure of the World*, Princeton University Press (1984), .

(6) (Space)time and persistence

- John McTaggart Ellis McTaggart, ‘Time’, in his *The Nature of Existence*, Volume II, Cambridge University Press (1927), 9-23.
- Arthur Prior, ‘The notion of the present’, in *Studium Generale*, Springer Verlag (1970), 245-248.
- C D Broad, ‘The general problem of time and change’, in his *Scientific Thought*, Routledge and Kegan Paul (1923), 53-84 (Ch. 3).
- J J C Smart, ‘The space-time world’, in his *Philosophy and Scientific Realism*, Routledge and Kegan Paul (1963), (Ch. 7).
- D C Williams, ‘The myth of passage’, *Journal of Philosophy* **48** (1951): 457-472.
- Martin Gardner, ‘The fourth dimension’, in his *The Ambidextrous Universe*, Basic Books (1964).
- Immanuel Kant, ‘Concerning the ultimate ground of the differentiation of directions in space’, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant: Theoretical Philosophy, 1755-1770*, trans and ed by D Walford and R Meerbote, Cambridge University press (1992), 365-372.

- David Lewis, 'The paradoxes of time travel', *American Philosophical Quarterly* **13** (1976): 145-152.
- Christopher Smeenk and Christian Wüthrich, 'Time travel and time machines', in Craig Callender (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Time*, Oxford University Press (2011), 577-630 (selections).

(7) Freedom and determinism

- Peter van Inwagen, 'The incompatibility of free will and determinism', *Philosophical Studies* **27** (1975): 185-199.
- David Lewis, 'Are we free to break the laws?', *Theoria* **47** (1981): 112-121.
- Barry Loewer, 'Freedom from physics: quantum mechanics and free will', *Philosophical Topics* **24** (1998): 91-112.

(8) Metaphysics and science

- Laurie Paul, 'Metaphysics as modeling: the handmaiden's tale', *Philosophical Studies* **160** (2012): 1-29.
- James Ladyman, 'Science, metaphysics and methods', *Philosophical Studies* **160** (2012): 31-51.
- Craig Callender, 'Philosophy of science and metaphysics', in Steven French and Juha Saatsi (eds.), *The Continuum Companion to Philosophy of Science*, Continuum (2011), 33-54.

Please let me know if there are particular topics or readings you would like to discuss in the seminar. I (and the class) may be willing to accommodate your wish.