

Proseminar in Metaphysics

Thursdays @ 5:30

It should come as no surprise that this class is designed to improve your ability to think critically about issues in metaphysics (**as a side-effect**, it should also prepare you to write a successful comprehensive exam in metaphysics if you must do so). The course is writing intensive; and, you will be required to write something every week.

Each member of this seminar will present on *at least* one of the readings. On the day that you present, you must also take notes on the discussion and post a brief synopsis of that discussion to the class blog. Depending on the numbers, people may have to do such synopses more than once during the semester—but we'll work that out.

For every week that you are not presenting, each member of the seminar will write a brief response, **no longer than 600 words** in length, to one of the readings.

Each member of the seminar must write **one** short paper, **no longer than 3000 words** in length, addressing one argument that is articulated in a paper that we read this semester. A successful paper will be the sort of paper that one could submit for a presentation at the APA (*American Philosophical Association*), or a similar conference.

Finally, If we find good reason to dwell on some issue, I am happy to revise the syllabus. The tentative course reading schedule, however, is as follows:

1/13	Cognitive Calisthenics	Lewis and Lewis , “Holes” Quine , “On what there is”
1/ 20	Modal Realism	Lewis , On the plurality of worlds, Chapter 1
1/27	Ersatz Possible worlds	Lewis , On the plurality of worlds, Chapter 2 * Melia , “Ersatz possible worlds” (optional) Lewis , On the plurality of worlds, Chapters 3
2/3	Are there Alternatives?	Kripke , “Identity and Necessity” Rosen , “Modal fictionalism” Sider , Reductive theories of modality (optional – nice review of positions)
2/10	Conterparts?	Lewis , “Counterparts or double lives” (OTPW CH3) Merricks , “The end of counterpart theory”
2/17	Coincident entities	David Wiggins , “On Being in the Same Place at the Same Time” Gibbard , “Contingent Identity” Bennett , “Spatio-temporal coincidence and the grounding problem”
2/24	Persistence	* Hawthorne , “Three-dimensionalism vs. four-dimensionalism” * Sider , “Temporal parts” Parsons “Must a four dimensionalist believe in temporal parts?”
3/3	Time	* Zimmerman , “The priveleged present” * Smart , “The tenseless theory of time”
3/17	Composite objects	* Van Cleve , “The moon and sixpence” Van Inwagen , <i>Material beings</i> (selections); Sider , “Van Inwagen and the possibility of gunk”
3/24	More Gunk and Junk	Shaffer , “From nihilism to monism” Bohn , “Must there be a top level?”
3/31	Bryce will be at the APA Central We can reschedule during reading week and do a session on Emergence and complexity	
4/7	More drastic solutions?	Rosen & Dorr , “Composition as fiction” * Markosian , “Brutal composition” and “Restricted composition (9-11)”
4/14	Causation	* Carroll , “Nailed to Hume’s Cross” Earman and Roberts , “Contact with the nomic” * Schaffer , “Causation and laws of nature”
4/28	Are There Abstract Entities	* Swoyer , “Abstract entities” * Dorr , “There are no abstract objects”