

Metaphysics Seminar

Notre Dame Fall 2011

12:30-1:45pm (Tues/Thurs), Location: DeBartolo Hall Rm 303

INSTRUCTOR: Prof. Meghan Sullivan
OFFICE HOURS: Tues/Thurs 8:00-9:30am and by appointment in 217 Malloy Hall. Please feel free to contact me to set up meetings.
CONTACT: Sullivan.meghan@gmail.com (preferred)

COURSE GOALS:

In this seminar, you will read about, discuss, and write about three central topics in contemporary analytic metaphysics:

(1) Time and Space: Is time "spread out" the way we ordinarily think space is? Is time travel logically possible? Is it physically possible? Does time flow or branch? Is the future open or indeterminate? Does anything exist that is not in time and space?

(2) Composition and Persistence: Are there any limits on when two objects compose a third? Do objects have temporal parts? Are parts "prior" to wholes or vice versa? What kinds of changes can an object undergo? When do new things come into existence? Are there vague objects? Can more than one object ever be located in the exact same region?

(3) Time and the Metaphysics of People: What is a person? What kinds of changes can a person survive? Do you go where your memories and mental states go? Are you identical to your body? To a soul? When do persons come to exist? Does strict numerical identity over time even matter? How should we understand death?

By the end of the course, you will know prominent arguments defending particular stances on these issues. You will be able to identify weaknesses in these arguments. And you will construct and defend original arguments on these issues.

REQUIREMENTS:

To succeed you must consistently attend the seminar, thoroughly understand key arguments, and write clear, persuasive and philosophically sophisticated essays. Your grade for the course will be based on the following components:

40% Take-Home Exams: There will be two take-home exams in this course. You are allowed to use any notes and books that you like, but you may not communicate with anyone about any aspect of the exams. Each exam is worth 20% of your grade. The exams have the following format: I will release three short essay questions. You must choose two and answer each in two, typed double-spaced pages (or less). You will have 24 hours to answer the questions and submit your work online.

20% In-Class Presentations: Each student must give a 7-10 minute argument introduction. You will be assigned a paper from the class (presentation papers are marked with a *). The argument introduction will succinctly explain the main argument and key terms of the paper and raise issues for discussion. You will also provide a handout for your argument introduction. You will be graded on accuracy, informativeness, and ability to stick to the time constraints. I recommend previewing your argument introduction in office hours before the live event.

10% Participation: You are expected to attend **every** seminar, ask interesting questions, help others understand the material, and provide interesting criticisms of other students paper proposals.

30% Seminar Paper: You will write an 8-10 page, double-spaced, original metaphysics paper. It will be clearly written, cogently argued, and philosophically sophisticated. You will have opportunities to get feedback and edit the paper. Participation in the workshop process will factor into your final grade.

GRADING:

Essays will be graded on an A to F scale. You will write, edit, and rewrite the essays until they are **very good**. An A reflects a well-written, cogent argument that raises interesting and original points. A B essay is clearly written, but there are some unnecessary diversions, the central argument is implausible or invalid, or some key concepts are inadequately defined. A C essay has an unclear or unsupported argument. A D or F essay is late, very unclear, or fails to engage with the central question of the assignment. There are many borderline grades in between.

CLASS ETIQUETTE AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

I expect you to behave ethically, at least as pertains to matters in this class. Students are encouraged to ask questions, respond to other students' questions, and raise issues. Everyone is expected to treat others critically but respectfully. Further, I take academic integrity very seriously. **Papers and tests must represent your own, original work. Cheating of any kind will be reported to the relevant academic dean, will result in a failing grade on the assignment, and could result in your suspension or expulsion from Notre Dame.** If you have any questions about this policy or acceptable collaboration with other students, please contact me.

TEXTBOOKS:

We'll mostly be reading articles in this course, but you may wish to purchase:

Four-Dimensionalism (Theodore Sider)

Persistence: Contemporary Readings (Haslanger and Kurtz.)

The Sider book will be especially useful. I have ordered some copies of both at the bookstore. **The selections from the Sider, Parfit, and Merricks books are also**

available free through the Hesburgh library website. Articles we be put on the Concourse/Blackboard website or distributed in class. The code for the course is FA11-PHIL-43501-01.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE:

Below is a tentative schedule for the seminar. Readings will be posted online, and they should be done before each assigned seminar. The order and lineup will very likely change somewhat depending on our interests.

Date	Topic	Assigned Reading(s)
23-Aug	Overview- How Do We Debate in Metaphysics?	
25-Aug	Presentism	"Presentism and Temporary Intrinsics" (Zimmerman)
30-Aug	Issues for Presentism	Sider Chap 2 "Arguments Against Presentism" from <i>Four-Dimensionalism...</i> book available on Hesburgh website.
1-Sep	Four-Dimensionalism	Sider Chap 3 "Four-Dimensionalism"
6-Sep	Issues for Four-Dimensionalism	* "Parthood and Identity Across Time" (Thomson)
8-Sep	Time Travel for Four-Dimensionalists	* "The Paradoxes of Time Travel" (Lewis)
13-Sep	Time Travel for A-Theorists	* "Changing the Past" (Van Inwagen)
15-Sep	The Open Future	* "The Open Future: Phil Compass" (Torre)
20-Sep	Arguments for 4Dism	Sider Chap 4
22-Sep	The Puzzle(s) of Spatiotemporal Coincidence	Sider Chap 5.
27-Sep	Arguments Against 4Dism	*Sider Chap 6.
29-Sep	Mereological Essentialism	Chisholm Chap 3
4-Oct	Old Nihilism	* "Considerations in Favour of Eliminativism" Objects and Persons Chapter 2 (Merricks) Available on Hesburgh website.
6-Oct	EXAM 1	No Reading
11-Oct	New Nihilism	* "Against Parthood" (Sider)
13-Oct	Monism	* "Is There a Fundamental Level?" (Schaffer)
18-Oct	FALL BREAK	Work on Paper Proposals
20-Oct	FALL BREAK	Work on Paper Proposals
25-Oct	What is Vagueness?	"Intro to the Sorites" (Williamson) Paper Proposals Due.
27-Oct	Vagueness I- Supervaluationism	* "Many But Almost One" (Lewis)

1-Nov	Vagueness II- Ontological Vagueness	* "Ontic Vagueness: A Guide for the Perplexed" (Barnes)
3-Nov	The Metaphysics of Death I	* "The Dead" (Yourgrau)
8-Nov	The Metaphysics of Death II	* Time and Existence (Bradley)
10-Nov	Animalism and Bodily Criteria for Personal Identity	* "An Argument for Animalism" (Olson)
15-Nov	Dualism	* "Should a Christian be a Mind-Body Dualist?" Baker/Zimmerman debate.
17-Nov	Surviving Death and Vague Personal Identity	Where Am I? (Dennett) and Chap 3.10-3.13 in Parfit's <i>Reasons and Persons</i> . Available Online through Hesburgh library. Initial Draft of Paper Due.
22-Nov	Do Criteria for Personal Identity Matter?	* "Survival and Identity" (Lewis) Peer Critiques Due.
24-Nov	THANKSGIVING	STUDY FOR EXAM
29-Nov	EXAM 2	
1-Dec	The Possibility of Resurrection. (Special guest- Dr. Dave Anderson.)	"Possibility of Resurrection" (van Inwagen) "Materialism and Survival" (Zimmerman).
6-Dec	Quineanism and Hyperquineanism	* "Meta-ontology" (van Inwagen)
8-Dec	Wrap Up	Final Paper Drafts Due by the Day of the Final Exam.