

# Metaphysics

SYLLABUS, HT2017  
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## Introduction

The course will consist of eight tutorial meetings which cover a range of topics of recent interest in metaphysics. Each week you will be expected to hand in an essay 24 hours in advance or the tutorial which responds to the prompt for that week's reading. The essay should be no more than 1500 words, and as focused as possible, carefully defending a single claim rather than providing a broad survey of the topic. Written work will be marked, but not graded, offering feedback for points at which you can improve the clarity of your exposition, tighten philosophical argumentation, and strengthen your understanding of the topics under discussion.

I suggest beginning each week's assignment by skimming the overview paper, doing your best to gain some grasp of the terrain before carefully reading the core papers. At times it can be helpful to refer back to the overview in order to better orient yourself in the text each week. If you are having a hard time, or struggling to make sense of something, I invite you to contact me by email while conducting your research. Before starting your writing, I suggest outlining and re-outlining your paper until you know exactly what you want to say before attempting to say it in the paper. Here are a number of further points to keep in mind while writing your essays:

- (A) Do not write an introduction: begin each essay with either your central thesis, an example by which to introduce a concept, etc.
- (B) Write in plain and simple English.
- (C) If you use terms of art, clearly explain what each term means, striving to use as few terms of art as you can manage.
- (D) Do your best to present both your arguments as well as the arguments of others in a minimal form, clearly stating premises and conclusions, avoiding redundancies or unnecessary points.
- (E) Unless you use sources outside those listed below, you do not need to write a bibliography— in-text citations are perfectly adequate, e.g., (Fine 2012) writes, "For philosophy..."

If you discover a focused question during your research which you prefer to the prompt I have provided, please contact me by email to confirm.

## Week 1: Existence

### OVERVIEW

- (\*) Phillip Bricker. "Ontological Commitment". In: *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Ed. by Edward N. Zalta. Winter 2016. Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2016

### CORE PAPERS

- (1) Bertrand Russell. "The Philosophy of Logical Atomism: Lectures 5-6". de. In: *Monist* 29.2 (1919). Ed. by Sherwood J. B. Sugden, pp. 190–222. DOI: 10.5840/monist19192922
- (2) **W. V. Quine. "On What There Is". In: *The Review of Metaphysics* 2.5 (Sept. 1948), pp. 21–38**
- (3) Terence Parsons. "Referring to Nonexistent Objects". en. In: *Theory and Decision* 11.1 (1979), pp. 95–110. DOI: 10.1007/BF00126695
- (4) Peter Van Inwagen. "Meta-Ontology". In: *Erkenntnis* (1975-) 48.2/3 (1998), pp. 233–250. DOI: 10.2307/20012842

**QUESTION:** *When is our use of language ontologically committing?*

## Week 2: Modality

### OVERVIEW

- (\*) Theodore Sider. "Reductive Theories of Modality". In: (Sept. 2005). DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199284221.003.0008

### CORE PAPERS

- (1) David Lewis. *Counterfactuals*. Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1973, Ch. 4.1
- (2) **Robert Stalnaker. "Possible Worlds". In: *Noûs* 10.1 (Mar. 1976), pp. 65–75. DOI: 10.2307/2214477**
- (3) Gideon Rosen. "Modal Fictionalism". en. In: *Mind* XCIX.395 (1990), pp. 327–354. DOI: 10.1093/mind/XCIX.395.327
- (4) Barbara Vetter. "'Can' Without Possible Worlds: Semantics for Anti-Humeans". In: *Philosophers' Imprint* 13 (2013)

**QUESTION:** *What is it to be metaphysically possible?*

## Week 3: Essence

### OVERVIEW

- (\*) Teresa Robertson and Philip Atkins. "Essential vs. Accidental Properties". In: *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Ed. by Edward N. Zalta. Summer 2016. Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2016

### CORE PAPERS

- (1) Alvin Plantinga. "Actualism and Possible Worlds". en. In: *Theoria* 42.1-3 (Apr. 1976), pp. 139–160. DOI: 10.1111/j.1755-2567.1976.tb00681.x
- (2) Robert Merrihew Adams. "Actualism and Thisness". en. In: *Synthese* 49.1 (Oct. 1981), pp. 3–41. DOI: 10.1007/BF01063914
- (3) **Kit Fine. "Essence and Modality". In: *Philosophical Perspectives* 8 (1994), pp. 1–16. DOI: 10.2307/2214160**
- (4) Delia Graff Fara. "Dear Haecceitism". en. In: *Erkenntnis* 70.3 (Jan. 2009), pp. 285–297. DOI: 10.1007/s10670-008-9149-3

**QUESTION:** *Should we accept the ideology of essences?*

## Week 4: Ground

### OVERVIEW

- (\*) Fabrice Correia and Benjamin Schnieder. "Grounding: An Opinionated Introduction". In: *Metaphysical Grounding: Understanding the Structure of Reality*. Ed. by Fabrice Correia and Benjamin Schnieder. Cambridge University Press, 2012, p. 1

### CORE PAPERS

- (1) Gideon Rosen. "Metaphysical Dependence: Grounding and Reduction". In: *Modality: Metaphysics, Logic, and Epistemology* 2007 (2010). Ed. by Bob Hale and Aviv Hoffmann, pp. 109–136
- (2) **Kit Fine. "Guide to Ground". In: *Metaphysical Grounding: Understanding the Structure of Reality*. Ed. by Fabrice Correia and Benjamin Schnieder. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, pp. 37–80**
- (3) Fabrice Correia and Alexander Skiles. "Grounding, Essence, And Identity". en. In: *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* (2017), n/a–n/a. DOI: 10.1111/phpr.12468

**QUESTION:** *What is the relationship between essence and ground?*

## Week 5: Time

### OVERVIEW

- (\*) Ned Markosian, Meghan Sullivan, and Nina Emery. "Time". In: *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Ed. by Edward N. Zalta. Fall 2016. Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2016

### CORE PAPERS

- (1) **Theodore Sider**. *Four-Dimensionalism: An Ontology of Persistence and Time*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2001, ch. 2
- (2) Ned Markosian. "A Defence of Presentism". In: *Oxford Studies in Metaphysics* 1.3 (2004), pp. 47–82
- (3) Kit Fine. "The Reality of Tense". en. In: *Synthese* 150.3 (June 2006), pp. 399–414. DOI: 10.1007/s11229-005-5515-8

**QUESTION:** *Do past and future things exist in addition to what is present?*

## Week 6: Change

### OVERVIEW

- (\*) Sally Haslanger. "Persistence Through Time". In: *The Oxford Handbook of Metaphysics*. Ed. by Michael J. Loux and Dean W. Zimmerman. Oxford University Press, 2003, pp. 315–354

### CORE PAPERS

- (1) Sally Haslanger. "Endurance and Temporary Intrinsic". en. In: *Analysis* 49.3 (June 1989), pp. 119–125. DOI: 10.1093/analys/49.3.119
- (2) Theodore Sider. *Four-Dimensionalism: An Ontology of Persistence and Time*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2001, ch. 4.6
- (3) **Sally Haslanger. "Endurance and Temporary Intrinsic". en. In: *Analysis* 49.3 (June 1989), pp. 119–125. DOI: 10.1093/analys/49.3.119**
- (4) David Lewis. "Tensing the Copula". en. In: *Mind* 111.441 (Jan. 2002), pp. 1–14. DOI: 10.1093/mind/111.441.1

**QUESTION:** *Can objects survive changes?*

## Week 7: Laws

### OVERVIEW

- (\*) John W. Carroll. "Laws of Nature". In: *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Ed. by Edward N. Zalta. Fall 2016. Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2016

### CORE PAPERS

- (1) Michael Tooley. "The Nature of Laws". In: *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 7.4 (1977), pp. 667–698
- (2) Fred I. Dretske. "Laws of Nature". In: *Philosophy of Science* 44.2 (1977), pp. 248–268
- (3) **David Lewis**. "New Work for a Theory of Universals". In: *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 61.4 (Dec. 1983), pp. 343–377. DOI: 10.1080/00048408312341131
- (4) Barry Loewer. "Humean Supervenience". In: *Philosophical Topics* 24.1 (1996), pp. 101–127

**QUESTION:** *What is a law of nature?*



## Week 8: Modal Science

### OVERVIEW

- (\*) James Garson. "Modal Logic". In: *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Ed. by Edward N. Zalta. Spring 2016. Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2016, §§2,6,7

### CORE PAPERS

- (1) **Timothy Williamson. "Modal Science". In: *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 46.4-5 (Sept. 2016), pp. 453–492. DOI: 10.1080/00455091.2016.1205851**
- (2) Theodore Sider. "On Williamson and Simplicity in Modal Logic". In: *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 46.4-5 (Sept. 2016), pp. 683–698. DOI: 10.1080/00455091.2015.1132974

**QUESTION:** *Is existence necessary?*