

# Metaphysics

(PHIL-4386)

Spring 2016

**Professor:** Daniel Giberman

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**Office Hours:** by appointment (email me with 24 hours notice)

**Section:** 001

**Time and Place of Class Meetings:** T/Th 3:30-4:50 Preston Hall 202

**Description of Course Content:** This course is a non-exhaustive survey of topics central to contemporary analytic metaphysics: ontology, modality, properties, objects, mereology, persistence, personal identity, spacetime, and fundamentality. Readings include work by Quine, Lewis, Armstrong, Thomson, Field, Fine, Sider, and more. Evaluation will consist of a midterm examination, two short papers, and a final paper, on each of which students will be assessed for conceptual clarity, communicative economy, and critical reasoning.

**Student Learning Outcomes:** Students will gain mastery of core debates in contemporary analytic metaphysics through discussion and assignments that will bolster their skills of argumentation; clear thought, speech, and writing; and penetrating yet charitable critical analysis. They will also be exposed to ways in which core metaphysics overlaps foundational issues in empirical science, medical ethics, and religion.

## **Required Textbooks:**

1. *Metaphysics: an Anthology, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*, Kim, Korman, and Sosa (Eds.) Blackwell (hereafter 'M')
  2. Course Reader, which soon will be (or is) available at the university bookstore (hereafter 'CR')
- Other readings may be found easily online.

## **Descriptions of major assignments and examinations:**

Two Short Papers (3 pp., critically assessing an argument from one reading)

Midterm Exam (multiple choice, short answer, short essay)

Final Paper (5-7 pp., critically assessing a debate across two or more readings)

**Attendance:** You should come to every lecture on time and fully prepared by having thoroughly and carefully read the assigned text(s) for that lecture (see below section on expectations for out-of-class study). That's what I expect. That said, I do not plan to take attendance. You're adults and college is expensive. If it's not worth it *to* you to show up, it's not worth it *for* you to show up.

**No Screened Devices:** Students are not allowed to use screened devices (laptops, tablets, phones, etc.) during lecture. Exceptions will be made only for students who have an independently established need to use such devices for learning purposes (e.g. students with disability documentation).

## **Grading:**

Short Papers (15% each)

Midterm (30%)

Final Paper (40%)

**Expectations for Out-of-Class Study:** You should prepare for each lecture by giving each text two hours of careful reading, i.e. focused, sustained, and perhaps repeated reading in a quiet setting with questions and objections noted. Expect to spend at least 15-20 hours *outside class* on each paper and another 15-20 preparing for the exam.

**Note on Out-of-Class Group Work:** You are welcome to form study groups if you wish. However, each individual must complete and hand in his or her own papers and exam.

#### University Policies:

**Drop Policy:** Students may drop or swap (adding and dropping a class concurrently) classes through self-service in MyMav from the beginning of the registration period through the late registration period. After the late registration period, students must see their academic advisor to drop a class or withdraw. Undeclared students must see an advisor in the University Advising Center. Drops can continue through a point two-thirds of the way through the term or session. It is the student's responsibility to officially withdraw if they do not plan to attend after registering. **Students will not be automatically dropped for non-attendance.** Repayment of certain types of financial aid administered through the University may be required as the result of dropping classes or withdrawing. For more information, contact the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships (<http://www.uta.edu/ao/fao/>).

**Disability Accommodations:** UT Arlington is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of all federal equal opportunity legislation, including *The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)*, *The Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act (ADAAA)*, and *Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act*. All instructors at UT Arlington are required by law to provide "reasonable accommodations" to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of disability. Students are responsible for providing the instructor with official notification in the form of a letter certified by the **Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD)**. Students experiencing a range of conditions (Physical, Learning, Chronic Health, Mental Health, and Sensory) that may cause diminished academic performance or other barriers to learning may seek services and/or accommodations by contacting:

**The Office for Students with Disabilities, (OSD)** [www.uta.edu/disability](http://www.uta.edu/disability) or calling 817-272-3364.  
**Counseling and Psychological Services, (CAPS)** [www.uta.edu/caps/](http://www.uta.edu/caps/) or calling 817-272-3671.

Only those students who have officially documented a need for an accommodation will have their request honored. Information regarding diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining disability-based academic accommodations can be found at [www.uta.edu/disability](http://www.uta.edu/disability) or by calling the Office for Students with Disabilities at (817) 272-3364.

**Title IX:** *The University of Texas at Arlington does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, disabilities, genetic information, and/or veteran status in its educational programs or activities it operates. For more information, visit [uta.edu/eos](http://uta.edu/eos). For information regarding Title IX, visit [www.uta.edu/titleIX](http://www.uta.edu/titleIX).*

**Academic Integrity:** Students enrolled all UT Arlington courses are expected to adhere to the UT Arlington Honor Code:

*I pledge, on my honor, to uphold UT Arlington's tradition of academic integrity, a tradition that values hard work and honest effort in the pursuit of academic excellence.*

*I promise that I will submit only work that I personally create or contribute to group collaborations, and I will appropriately reference any work from other sources. I will follow the highest standards of integrity and uphold the spirit of the Honor Code.*

UT Arlington faculty members may employ the Honor Code as they see fit in their courses, including (but not limited to) having students acknowledge the honor code as part of an examination or requiring students to incorporate the honor code into any work submitted. Per UT System *Regents' Rule* 50101, §2.2, suspected violations of university's standards for academic integrity (including the Honor Code) will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. Violators will be disciplined in accordance with University policy, which may result in the student's suspension or expulsion from the University.

**Electronic Communication:** UT Arlington has adopted MavMail as its official means to communicate with students about important deadlines and events, as well as to transact university-related business regarding financial aid, tuition, grades, graduation, etc. All students are assigned a MavMail account and are responsible for checking the inbox regularly. There is no additional charge to students for using this account, which remains active even after graduation. Information about activating and using MavMail is available at <http://www.uta.edu/oit/cs/email/mavmail.php>.

**Student Feedback Survey:** At the end of each term, students enrolled in classes categorized as "lecture," "seminar," or "laboratory" shall be directed to complete an online Student Feedback Survey (SFS). Instructions on how to access the SFS for this course will be sent directly to each student through MavMail approximately 10 days before the end of the term. Each student's feedback enters the SFS database anonymously and is aggregated with that of other students enrolled in the course. UT Arlington's effort to solicit, gather, tabulate, and publish student feedback is required by state law; students are strongly urged to participate. For more information, visit <http://www.uta.edu/sfs>.

**Final Review Week:** A period of five class days prior to the first day of final examinations in the long sessions shall be designated as Final Review Week. The purpose of this week is to allow students sufficient time to prepare for final examinations. During this week, there shall be no scheduled activities such as required field trips or performances; and no

instructor shall assign any themes, research problems or exercises of similar scope that have a completion date during or following this week *unless specified in the class syllabus*. During Final Review Week, an instructor shall not give any examinations constituting 10% or more of the final grade, except makeup tests and laboratory examinations. In addition, no instructor shall give any portion of the final examination during Final Review Week. During this week, classes are held as scheduled. In addition, instructors are not required to limit content to topics that have been previously covered; they may introduce new concepts as appropriate.

**Emergency Exit Procedures:** Should we experience an emergency event that requires us to vacate the building, students should exit the room and move toward the nearest exit. When exiting the building during an emergency, one should never take an elevator but should use the stairwells. Faculty members and instructional staff will assist students in selecting the safest route for evacuation and will make arrangements to assist individuals with disabilities.

**Student Support Services:** UT Arlington provides a variety of resources and programs designed to help students develop academic skills, deal with personal situations, and better understand concepts and information related to their courses. Resources include tutoring, major-based learning centers, developmental education, advising and mentoring, personal counseling, and federally funded programs. For individualized referrals, students may visit the reception desk at University College (Ransom Hall), call the Maverick Resource Hotline at 817-272-6107, send a message to [resources@uta.edu](mailto:resources@uta.edu), or view the information at <http://www.uta.edu/universitycollege/resources/index.php>

## Course Schedule and Readings:

Jan. 19: Introduction

### Ontology

Jan. 21: W.V.O. Quine: "On What There Is" (M)

Jan. 26: Rudolf Carnap: "Empiricism, Semantics, and Ontology" (M)

Jan. 28: No class (Giberman out of town)

Feb. 2: Matti Eklund: "The Picture of Reality as an Amorphous Lump" (CR)

Feb. 4: Hartry Field: selection from *Realism, Mathematics, and Modality* (CR)

### Modality

Feb. 9: Alvin Plantinga: "Modality: Basic Concepts and Distinctions" (M)

Feb. 11: David Lewis: "A Philosopher's Paradise" (M)

SHORT PAPER 1 ASSIGNED

Feb. 16: Robert Stalnaker: "Possible Worlds" (M)

David Lewis: selection from *On the Plurality of Worlds* "The Ersatzist Programme" (CR)

### Properties

Feb. 18: David Armstrong: selection from *Universals: An Opinionated Introduction* (CR)

Feb. 23: David Lewis: "New Work for a Theory of Universals" (M)

Feb. 25: Keith Campbell: "The Metaphysic of Abstract Particulars" (M)

Anna-Sofia Maurin: "Tropes" (*Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*—free online)

SHORT PAPER 1 DUE IN CLASS

Mar. 1: Michael Devitt: "Ostrich Nominalism or Mirage Realism?" (CR)

W.V.O. Quine: "Soft Impeachment Disowned" (CR)

David Armstrong: "Against Ostrich Nominalism: A Reply to Devitt" (CR)

Mar. 3: No Class (Giberman out of town)

Mar. 8: Review for midterm (no new reading assigned)

Mar. 10: **midterm**

Mar. 14-18: Spring Break

Mar. 22: Michael Loux: selection from *Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction* (CR)  
Ted Sider: "Bare Particulars" (available online)

Mar. 24: Peter Simons: selection from *Parts: A Study in Ontology* (CR)  
Hud Hudson: "Simples and Gunk" (*Philosophy Compass*—available online)

Mar. 29: Peter Van Inwagen: "When are Objects Parts?" (M)  
SHORT PAPER 2 ASSIGNED

#### Persistence

Mar. 31: David Lewis: "The Problem of Temporary Intrinsic" (M)  
Mark Heller: "Temporal Parts of Four-Dimensional Objects" (M)

Apr. 5: Judith Jarvis Thomson: "Parthood and Identity Across Time" (M)

Apr. 7: Sally Haslanger: "Persistence Through Time" (CR)

#### Persons

Apr. 12: John Perry: "The Problem of Personal Identity" (CR)  
SHORT PAPER 2 DUE IN CLASS

Apr. 14: Derek Parfit: "Personal Identity" (M)

Apr. 19: Eric T. Olson: "An Argument for Animalism" (M)

#### Space

Apr. 21: Shamik Dasgupta: "Substantivalism vs. Relationalism About Space in Classical Physics"  
(*Philosophy Compass*—available online)

Apr. 26: Keith Campbell: selection from *Abstract Particulars* (CR)  
Jonathan Schaffer: "Spacetime, the One Substance" (available online)

#### Fundamentality

Apr. 28: Jonathan Schaffer: "On What Grounds What" (M)

May 3: David Lewis: introduction to *Philosophical Papers*, v. II (CR)  
Kit Fine: "Ontological Dependence" (JSTOR—available online)

May 5: Wrap up

May 12: FINAL PAPER DUE AT 2:00 PM

**Note:** I reserve the right to adjust this schedule in any way that serves the educational needs of the students enrolled in this course. DG