

Intro to Metaphysics

730:215:01:48416
TTh 2:50 - 4:10 pm
SC-221

The syllabi listed here are from the last term during which the course was taught and are posted only as a guide to some of the typical topics the course may cover. Please note that the readings and materials may change from term to term. An updated syllabus for the course for the coming semester will be posted closer to the start of the semester.

Office hour: Thursday, 4:30 - 6:00 pm, and by appointment, at the Barnes and Noble at

Rutgers
leesun.choi@gmail.com

Course Descriptions and Goals

This course is a topical introduction to metaphysics, a branch of philosophy that concerns itself with the most fundamental features of reality. Physics and other physical sciences also have as their goal the apprehension of the nature and structure of the physical world. In contrast with the physical sciences, however, metaphysics includes non-physical entities, such as mental states and free will, in its subject matter, and relies on a more *a priori* methodology. In other words, every existing entity including the non-material is examined in the non-empirical method.

Metaphysics is a discipline with a long history, and over the history, this discipline has covered a vast number of topics. When teaching and learning metaphysics, we need to choose what topics will be discussed. In this course, we will focus on four topics: personal identity, the mind-body relation, modality (necessity and possibility), and material constitution.

- **Personal Identity:** Think back ten or twenty years into your past. You now have little in common with that earlier you. You look different. You think different. The matter now making you up is almost completely different. So why is that earlier person you? What makes a person continue to be the same over time, despite such changes?
- **Mind-body relation:** We have strong intuitions about mind. Mental events and properties are distinct from physical events and properties. Moreover, mental states such as our conscious feelings are not explained in terms of physical terms. But some of our actions and behaviors are caused by our mental states. Because I feel pain, I scream out "Ouch". Mind and body are correlated and also causally interact. But in what way are these distinguished states related? Moreover, if every physical event is the produce of purely physical causal processes, it does not need a non-physical cause to bring it about. Then, how do the non-physical mental states cause the physical states, our actions and behaviors?
- **Modality:** Not all truths are treated in the same way. It is true that Barack Obama is current President of the United States. It is also true that all bachelors are unmarried. Although each of these is a truth, there is a big difference between them. The first truth might have been false: Obama might have lost the Presidential election. But the second truth could not have been false: bachelors are necessarily unmarried. What makes these truths so different?
- **Material Constitution:** Physical things are made of matter. For example, a clay statue is constituted by a lump of clay. But what is the relation of this material constitution? Is the constitution relation identity? But even if a statue is destroyed, the piece of clay keeps on existing. If constitution is not identity, a clay statue and the lump of clay from which it is

formed are two distinct physical objects? Their can be two bricks. The statue and the lump of clay, share exactly the same material?

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In this course, we will investigate physical problems which are under active debates in the present. This course is designed to show how to analyze the arguments by ancient and contemporary philosophers on each topic, and then to require and help you to construct your own argument on each topic.

Reading Materials

There is no main textbook for this course. We are going to read philosophical papers on each topic. Reading assignments will be posted on this course's Sakai website:

<https://sakai.rutgers.edu/portal/site/d5e0a3dd-4e98-40d6-b05d-e3912ff61e1c>

The followings are a couple of excellent resources for an introductory understanding of our topics:

Jaegwon Kim and Ernest Sosa (eds.), *A Companion to Metaphysics*, Blackwell
Michael Loux, *Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction*, Routledge
Earl Conee and Theodore Sider, *Riddles of Existence*, Oxford Univ. Press

For a further online resource, I recommend Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy:

<http://plato.stanford.edu>

Course Requirements and Grading

1. Attendance and Participation: Attendance is required in this course. In addition, every student is not allowed to be late. You should sign the attendance roll each class. The roll will be taken at the **beginning** of the class. Every student is allowed a maximum of 4 unexcused absences. A student who has more than 4 unexcused absences will be penalized with one point deduction for each absence from the attendance (numerical) grade. Excused absences are only for religious holidays, serious health problems, and serious family problems. To receive an excused absence, students need to provide an appropriate document such as a confirmation letter from a health care provider or from the office of the Dean of the college.

All students are required to read assigned materials and contribute to class discussions. You may meet the participation requirement in several ways: (i) participating in class discussions, (2) asking questions in class, (iii) posting your thoughts on the discussion forum of this course's Sakai website, (iv) attending office hours.

2. Exams: There will be two exams. A midterm exam is scheduled on **Thursday, March 14th**, during the regular class period, and a final exam is on **Friday, May 10th, from 12:00pm to 3:00 pm**. The final is not cumulative. These exams will consist of three or four essay questions. There is **no make-up exam** in this course unless you have one of the three absence excuses in above.

3. Paper: You are required to write one paper about 2000 -2500 words in length. In addition, you should submit your rough draft at least once to have my comments and revise your paper. The first **rough draft** due is on **Tuesday, Feb 19st**, and the second is on **Tuesday, March 26th**, and the third is on **Tuesday, April 16th**. The **final draft** is due on **Thursday, May 2nd**. You are highly recommended to submit your rough draft several times

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to polish your work. Topics will be posted on the course's Sakai website. A student who is late in submitting the final paper will be penalized with a one-point deduction for each day after the due date from the course grade.

For general guidance on writing philosophy papers, I recommend adapting the advice from: <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>

Your final grade will be determined by the weighted requirements as follows:

Paper	30%
Midterm	20%
Attendance	15%
Participation	10%
Final Exam	25%

Each requirement will be graded on the following scale:

A	30-28
B+	27-25
B	24-22
C+	21-19
C	18-16
D	15-13
F	12-

Academic Integrity

Rutgers Interim Academic Integrity Policy defines plagiarism as follows:

Plagiarism is the representation of the *words* or *ideas* of another as one's own. To avoid plagiarism, every direct quotation must be identified by quotation marks or by appropriate indentation and must be properly cited in the text or in a footnote. Acknowledgment is required when material from another source stored in print, *electronic* or other *medium* is paraphrased or summarized in whole or in part in one's own words.

Based on this definition, you are required to acknowledge direct quotations and paraphrases of materials found in any medium, including materials on the Internet. You can have more information about plagiarism on the web at

http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/files/documents/AI_Policy_9_01_2011.pdf

Plagiarism or cheating on exams will result in automatic failure of the course.

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Topics and Readings

Topic 1: Personal Identity

- Jan. 24th **Preview**
- Jan. 29th **Locke's Traditional Memory Theory**
• John Locke, "Of Identity and Diversity"
- Jan. 31st **Problems in the Memory Theory: Circularity**
• Joseph Butler, "Of Personal Identity"
• Thomas Reid, "Of Identity" pp. 139-142
- Feb. 5th **Psychological Continuity View**
• Sydney Shoemaker, "Persons and Their Parts"
- Feb. 7th **Reduplication Argument**
• Bernard Williams, "Personal Identity and Individuation"
• Richard Swinburne, "Personal Identity: Dualist Theory", pp. 427-434
- Feb. 12th **Fission: Identity and Survival**
• Derek Parfit, "Personal Identity"
- Feb. 14th **Fission: Multiple Occupancy View**
• David Lewis, "Identity and Survival"

Topic 2: The Mind-Body Problem

- Feb. 19th **Preview**
- Feb. 21st **The Cartesian Dualism and the Property Dualism**
• Rene Descartes, "Meditations on First Philosophy"
- Jan. 26st **Behaviorism**
• Carl Hempel, "The Logical Analysis of Psychology"
- Feb. 28th **The (Type) Identity Theory**
• J. J. C. Smart, "Sensation and Brain Processes"
- Mar. 5th **Functionalism**
• Hilary Putnam, "The Nature of Mental States"

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Mar. 7th

Consciousness

- David Chalmers, "The Problems of Consciousness" <http://consc.net/papers/montreal.html>

Topic 3: Modality

Mar. 26th

Preview

Mar. 28th

Conventionalism

- W.V.O Quine, "Truth by Convention"

Apr. 2nd

Necessity A Posteriori

- Saul Kripke, "Necessity and Identity"

Apr. 4th

Modal Realism

- David Lewis, "Plurality of the Worlds"

Apr. 9th

Abstractionism

- Alvin Plantinga, "Actualism and Possible Worlds"

Apr. 11th

Trans-world Identity

- David Lewis, "Counterparts or Double Lives?"

Course Schedule

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Date		Readings	Note
Jan. 22	introduction and how to write a philosophy paper		
Jan. 24	Personal Identity	Preview	
Jan. 29		The Classic Memory Theory	Locke
Jan. 31		Circularity Problem	Reid and Butler
Feb. 5		Psychological Continuity View	Shoemaker
Feb. 7		Reduplication Argument	Williams; Swinburne
Feb. 12		Fission: Identity and Survival	Parfit
Feb. 14		Fission: Multiple Occupancy View	Lewis
Feb. 19		The Mind-Body Problem	Preview
Feb. 21	Dualism		Descartes
Feb. 26	Behaviorism		Hempel
Feb. 28	The Identity Theory		Smart
Mar. 5	Functionalism		Putnam
Mar. 7	Consciousness		Chalmers
Mar. 12	Review		
Mar. 14	Midterm		
Mar. 19	Spring Recess		
Mar. 21			
Mar. 26	Modality	Preview	Rough Draft Due 2
Mar. 28		Conventionalism	Quine
Apr. 2		Necessity A Posteriori	Kripke
Apr. 4		Modal Realism	Lewis
Apr. 9		Abstractionism	Plantinga
Apr. 11		Trans-world Identity	Lewis
Apr. 16	Constitution	Preview	Rough Draft Due 3
Apr. 18		The Just-Matter Theory	Chisholm
Apr. 23		The Takeover Theory	Burke
Apr. 25		Nihilism	Merrick
Apr. 30		Four Dimensionalism	Sider
May 2	Review		Final Draft Due
May 10	Final (Friday, 12:00 PM – 3:00 PM) at the Regular Classroom		

Note: This schedule is subject to change. Changes, if necessary, will be announced in class or our Sakai website.