

Syllabus: Introduction to Metaphysics: Free Will, Social Construction, and Properties – 01:730:215

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Office hours: Fridays, email me to schedule a time

Overview

In this course we'll cover some ancient as well as contemporary questions in metaphysics. We'll start off by asking about free will: Does determinism preclude us from acting freely? Or can we make sense of free action even given that our actions are determined by the past? We'll turn to discussing social construction: What are genders? What are social institutions? We'll end by exploring properties: Is there literally something *REDNESS* that two red things share? Or can we account for their both being red in some other way?

Required Texts

- Alyssa Ney, *Metaphysics: An Introduction*.
 - o You can get either a printed version or an electronic version. Up to you.
 - ISBN: 978-0-415-64074-9 (hardback)
 - ISBN: 978-0-415-64075-6 (paperback)
 - ISBN: 978-1-315-77175-5 (ebook)

Course Structure

- This course has no regular meeting times. Instead, I will upload lecture videos for each officially scheduled class day (i.e. the days we would meet, were we meeting in person), and you can watch these whenever is convenient for you. But be sure to watch them in time to do the assignments (see the Assignments section).
- Every Friday, I will hold group office hours over Zoom for those who want to discuss the material. These are optional, and if you would like to attend just send me an email by Thursday at noon with time on Friday that work for you. I'll set up a time that works for those who are interested in attending.

Assignments

- Introduce yourself video
 - o By midnight the day after the first class, you must upload a short 1-2 minute video introducing yourself – e.g., say why you are taking the class, what year you're in, what your major is, etc.

- By midnight the next day, you must comment on your peers' videos. These can be a super short hello.
- Discussion posts
 - By midnight the day before each class, you must post on the discussion forum on Canvas. I will create a specific question for you to respond to. Posts should be roughly 3-5 sentences.
 - By midnight the day after each class, you must respond to two of your classmates' posts from the two days before, where you choose which posts to respond to. You can either try to provide an answer, provide further line of questioning, offer an objection, or offer a supporting line of reasoning. Posts should be roughly 2-3 sentences.
- Discussion videos
 - For each sub-topic of the course, you will have to upload a 2-3 minute video on the assigned topic. Generally, they will require you to explain an argument to your friends and/or family and then in the video discuss and assess their response.
 - You will be required to comment on two of your peer's videos. I'll assign these randomly using the Canvas peer review tool.
- Papers
 - There will be three papers.
 - Each will have a first draft due before the final paper, and you will be required to comment on two of your peer's drafts. I'll assign these randomly using the Canvas peer review tool.
 - The first two papers will be 3-5 double-spaced pages each, and the third will be 5-7 double-spaced pages.

Grade breakdown

- Your final grade will be calculated out of 100 points.
 - A = 93-100 points
 - B+ = 88-92 points
 - B = 83-87 points
 - C+ = 78-82 points
 - C = 73-77 points
 - D+ = 68-72 points
 - D = 63-67 points
- Participation
 - 1 introduce yourself video and comments on 2 classmates' videos: 2.5 points total
 - 24 sets of discussion comments and responses at 1 point for each set of comments and two responses: 24 points total

- 8 discussion videos for 1.5 points each: 12 points total
- 8 sets of comments on discussion videos at .5 point each: 4 points total
- Papers
 - Paper 1
 - First draft and workshop participation: 5 points
 - Final draft: 10 points
 - Paper 2
 - First draft and workshop participation: 5 points
 - Final draft: 12.5 points
 - Paper 3
 - First draft and workshop participation: 5 points
 - Final draft: 20 points

Schedule

Free Will

Overview of Free Will Debate

1. September 1: Syllabus; Ney, Chapter 9: Free Will, pp. 239-246
 - Introduce yourself video due September 2. Comments on everyone's videos due September 3.

Ability to Do Otherwise

Consequence Argument

2. September 3: van Inwagen, *A Theory of Free Will* ch. 3 secs. 10-11
 - Discussion comments due September 2; Responses due September 4
 September 8: No class; Monday Schedule
3. September 10: O'Connor, *Persons and Causes* ch. 1 pp. 3-15
 - Discussion comments due September 9; Responses due September 11
 - Discussion video on Consequence Argument due September 12; Comments due September 13

Frankfurt cases

4. September 15: Frankfurt, "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility"; Ney, Chapter 9: Free Will, "Compatibilism"
 - Discussion comments due September 14; Responses due September 16
5. September 17: Fischer and Ravizza, *Responsibility and Control* ch. 2
 - Discussion comments due September 16; Responses due September 18
 - Discussion video on Frankfurt cases due September 19; Comments due September 20

Source Freedom

Source Freedom vs Ability to Do Otherwise

6. September 22: Pereboom, "Source Incompatibilism and Alternative Possibilities"; Ney, Chapter 9: Free Will, "Skepticism about Free Will"
 - Discussion comments due September 21; Responses due September 23

Manipulation Argument

7. September 24: Pereboom, "A Manipulation Argument Against Compatibilism"
 - Discussion comments due September 23; Responses due September 25
 - Discussion video on Manipulation Argument due September 26 Comments due September 27

First Paper

8. September 29: Paper 1 workshop. Rough draft due by midnight September 29. Comments due by midnight September 30. Final draft due Oct 5 by midnight

Social Metaphysics

Social Construction

9. October 1: Ney, ch. 10 "The Metaphysics of Race"
 - Discussion comments due September 30; Responses due October 2
10. October 6: Haslanger, "Ontology and Social Construction" secs 1-2; "Feminism in Metaphysics" pp. 148-157
 - Discussion comments due October 5; Responses due October 7
11. October 8: Haslanger, "Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them to Be?"
 - Discussion comments due October 7; Responses due October 8
 - Discussion video on Social Construction due October 10; Comments due October 11

Constructing the Social

12. October 13: Searle, *Construction of Social Reality*, ch. 2 "Creating Institutional Facts"
 - Discussion comments due October 12; Responses due October 14
13. October 15: Thomasson, "Foundations for Social Ontology"
 - Discussion comments due October 14; Responses due October 16
14. October 20: Epstein, *The Ant Trap*, ch. 5 sec. "Grounding", ch. 6 "Grounding and Anchoring"
 - Discussion comments due October 19; Responses due October 21
 - Discussion video on Constructing the Social due September October 22; Comments due October 23

Second Paper

15. October 22: Paper 2 workshop. First drafts due midnight October 24. Comments due midnight October 25. Final draft due October 28 by midnight

Properties

Abstract/Concrete Distinction

16. October 27: Rosen, "Abstract Objects"; Ney, ch. 2 sec. "The Abstract/Concrete Distinction"
- Discussion comments due October 26; Responses due October 28

Universals

17. October 29: Armstrong, *Universals: An Opinionated Introduction* pt. 1 ch. 1 "The Problem"; Ney, ch. 2 sec. "Universals and the One Over Many Argument"
- Discussion comments due October 28; Responses due October 30
18. November 3: Armstrong, *Universals and Scientific Realism* ch. 7 "Transcendent Universals"
- Discussion comments due November 2; Responses due November 4
19. November 5: Perovic, Katarina, "Bradley's Regress"
- Discussion comments due November 4; Responses due November 6
 - Discussion video on Universals due November 7; Comments due November 8

Nominalism

20. November 10: Price, "Universals and Resemblances"; Ney, ch. 2 pp. 71-79
- Discussion comments due November 9; Responses due November 11
21. November 12: Armstrong, *Universals and Scientific Realism* ch. 5 "Resemblance Nominalism"
- Discussion comments due November 11; Responses due November 13
22. November 17: Devitt, "'Ostrich Nominalism' or 'Mirage Realism'?"
- Discussion comments due November 16; Responses due November 18
23. November 19: Lewis, *New Work for a Theory of Universals*, pp. 343-355
- Discussion comments due November 18; Responses due November 20
 - Discussion video on Nominalism due November 21; Comments due November 22

Tropes

24. November 24: Williams, "On the Elements of Being: I"; Ney, ch. 2 p. 80
- Discussion comments due November 23; Responses due November 25
- November 26: No class; Thanksgiving
25. December 1: Campbell, "The Metaphysics of Abstract Particulars"
- Discussion comments due November 30; Responses due December 2
26. December 3: Maurin, "Trope Theory and the Bradley Regress"
- Discussion comments due December 2; Responses due December 4
27. December 8: Daly, "Tropes"

- Discussion comments due December 7; Responses due December 9
- Discussion video on Nominalism due December 10; Comments due December 11

Paper 3

28. December 10: Paper 3 workshop; First drafts due by midnight December 13; Comments due December 14 by midnight; Final draft due December 21 by midnight