

PHILOSOPHY 318: Metaphysics

Fall 2013

Professor Shamik Dasgupta
Office: 205 Marx Hall
(609) 258-4290
shamikd@princeton.edu

Preceptor: Robbie Hirsch (robbiehirsch@gmail.com)

Classes:

- 2 lectures per week, 1.30-2.20pm T/Th
- 1 precept each week, times TBD

Assessment:

- Midterm exam, in class on October 24th (the Thursday before Fall break), 20%
- Short paper (max. 1000 words), due November 4th, 25%
- Final exam, time and date TBD, 20%
- Long paper (max. 2000 words), due January 14th (Dean's Date), 35%

Academic Integrity:

- I strongly encourage you to discuss the material in this class with other students. This includes your ideas for papers: their feedback will improve your ideas.
- Your papers should then be your own work. This means that, having talked about your ideas with friends, you should sit down on your own and write the paper yourself.
 - It's fine to get feedback from other students on drafts, on the content or the presentation of the paper. But the other student should not re-write anything for you.
 - It's also fine to use the writing center—in fact this is encouraged!
- Please see the University's booklet on academic integrity:
<http://www.princeton.edu/pr/pub/integrity/pages/intro/index.htm>

Syllabus

All readings are required unless marked "Supplementary". They are available in PDF format on Blackboard. Full bibliographic details are contained within the PDFs.

Topic 1: Is there a scientific explanation of our existence?

Sept 12th

Why is there something rather than nothing?

- van Inwagen, *Metaphysics*, chapter 1: "Introduction"
- Albert, "On the Origin of Everything", *New York Times*, 3/23/12
- Clarke, "A Modern Formulation of the Cosmological Argument"

Sept 17th Evidence of design I: Biological Complexity

- Sober, “The Design Argument”

Sept 19th Evidence of design II: Fine-Tuning

- Collins, “God, Design, and Fine-Tuning”
- van Inwagen, *Metaphysics*, chapter 9: “The Place of Rational Beings in the World: Design and Purpose”

Supplementary reading:

- Rowe, “The Cosmological Argument” (on the cosmological argument)
- Garcia, “Teleological and Design Arguments” (overview of a number of different design arguments)
- Weisberg, “Firing Squads and Fine Tuning: Sober on the Design Argument” (objects to Sober’s analysis of observer selection effects in Sober’s “The Design Argument”)
- Sober, “Absence of Evidence and Evidence of Absence: Evidential Transitivity in Connection with Fossils, Fishing, Fine-Tuning, and Firing Squads” (in sections 5-9 he responds to Weisberg and revises his earlier view)
- Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, chapter 4, pp. 134-151 (his response to the fine-tuning argument)

Topic 2: Space

Sept 24th The Bucket Argument

- Sklar, *Space, Time, and Spacetime*, chapter 3, pp. 157-173
- Maudlin, *Philosophy of Physics: Space and Time*, chapter 2, pp. 17-24
- Sklar, *Space, Time, and Spacetime*, chapter 3, pp. 182-193

Sept 26th Symmetry

- Maudlin, *Philosophy of Physics: Space and Time*, chapter 2 pp 34-46
- Maudlin, *Philosophy of Physics: Space and Time*, chapter 3

Oct 1st Conventionalism about geometry

- Reichenbach, *The Philosophy of Space and Time*, chapter 1, p. 1-37
- Poincare, selections from *Science and Hypothesis*

Supplementary Reading:

- Sklar, *Space, Time, and Spacetime*, chapter 3, pp. 198-202 (on Machian relationalism)
- Sklar, *Space, Time, and Spacetime*, chapter 3, pp. 225-234 (on the bucket argument)

- The Leibniz-Clark correspondence, reprinted in Huggett, *Space from Zeno to Einstein*, chapter 8: “Leibniz and Clark”
- Horwich, “On the Existence of Time, Space and Space-Time” (on the bucket argument, and also symmetry arguments)
- Friedman, “Geometry, Convention and the Relativized Apriori: Reichenbach, Schlick and Carnap” (on Reichenbach’s conventionalism)
- Sklar, *Space, Time, and Spacetime*, chapter 2, pp. 79-147 (on the epistemology of geometry)

Topic 3: Is there a ready-made world?

- Oct 3rd** Anti-realism
- Boghossian, *Fear of Knowledge*, chapter 3: “Constructing the Facts”
- Oct 8th** Problems for anti-realism
- Goodman, “The New Riddle of Induction”
 - Lewis, “Putnam’s Paradox”, pp. 56-68
- Oct 10th** Case Studies: Water, Lemons, Gender, and Race,
- Leslie, “Essence and Natural Kinds: When Science Meets Preschooler Intuition”
 - Haslanger, “Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them to Be?”

Supplementary Reading:

- Boghossian, *Fear of Knowledge*, chapters 1 and 2 (for some background on “social constructivism”)
- Rorty, “Relativism: Finding and Making” (Rorty’s statement of his view)
- Putnam, “Truth and Convention”
- Quine, “Natural Kinds”
- Lewis, “New Work for a Theory of Universals” (on a number of reasons why realism has an advantage over anti-realism)
- Sider, *Writing the Book of the World*, chapter 3 (on the advantages of realism over anti-realism)
- Spencer, “What ‘Biological Racial Realism’ Should Mean”

Topic 4: Time

- Oct 15th** Introduction to time and persistence
- Sider, *Four Dimensionalism*, chapter 2, pp. 11-21
- Oct 17th** Taking tense seriously
- Zimmerman, “The Privileged Present”

- Paul, “Temporal Experience”
- van Inwagen, *Metaphysics*, chapter 4, p. 71-81

Oct 22nd Against Serious Tense

- Sider, *Four Dimensionalism*, chapter 2, pp. 25-52
- Maudlin, *Philosophy of Physics: Space and Time*, chapter 4

Supplementary reading:

- Ross Cameron, “Truthmaking for Presentists” (on the truth-making objection to presentism)
- Braddon-Mitchell, “How Do we Know that it’s Now Now?”
- Arthur Prior, “Some Free Thinking about Time” (a classic defense of serious tense)
- Brogaard, “Span Operators” (critiques the argument against presentism from cross-temporal relations)
- Maudlin, “Remarks on the passage of time” (defends serious tense)
- Monton “Prolegmena to Any Future Physics-Based Metaphysics” (on the argument from relativity against serious tense)
- Putnam, “Time and Physical Geometry” (the classic statement of the argument from relativity against serious tense)

Oct 24th Midterm exam

MIDTERM BREAK

Topic 5: Persistence

Nov 5th Perdurantism

- Sider, “Temporal Parts”
- Haslanger, “Persistence Through Time”

Nov 7th Endurance and material constitution

- Fine, “In defense of Three-Dimensionalism”
- Johnston, “Hylomorphism”, pp. 652-675

Supplementary reading:

- Koslicki, selections from *The Structure of Objects*. Oxford: OUP (rejects the Lewis/Sider picture and motivates a hylomorphic picture)
- Thomson, “Parthood and Identity Across Time” (a defense of endurance)
- Fine, “Things and Their Parts” (contains objections to perdurantism, and a sketch of his hylomorphic theory of objects)
- Sider, *Four-Dimensionalism*, chapters 4, 5 and 6 (develops arguments for and against perdurance)
- Rea, “Constitution and Kind Membership” (a defense of Burke’s dominance account)

- Haslanger, “Endurance and Temporary Intrinsic” (on Lewis’ argument for perdurance from temporary intrinsic)

Topic 6: Personal identity

- Nov 12th** The body criterion and the psychological criterion I
- Parfit, *Reasons and Persons* chapter 10, sections 75-78
 - Parfit, *Reasons and Persons* chapter 11, sections 80-82
- Nov 14th** The body criterion and the psychological criterion II
- Thomson, “People and their Bodies”
 - Williams, “The Self and the Future”
- Nov 19th** Is identity what matters?
- Parfit, *Reasons and Persons* chapter 12, sections 87-90
 - Lewis “Survival and Identity”

Supplementary Reading:

- Gendler, “Exceptional Persons” (on the extent to which we can trust our intuitions about cases, with a focus on Williams’ paper “The Self and the Future”)
- Dennett, “Where am I?” (a terrific read!)
- Parfit, “Persons, Bodies, and Human Beings” (a response to Thomson’s “People and their Bodies”)
- Parfit, “Divided Minds and the Nature of Persons” (brief outline of his arguments in *Reasons and Persons*)
- Parfit, other parts of chapters 10, 11 and 12 from *Reasons and Persons*
- Johnston, “Human Concerns Without Superlative Selves”
- Wolf, “Self Interest and Interest in Selves”

Topic 7: Freedom and law

- Nov 21st** Freedom and truth
- Merricks, “Truth and Freedom”
- Nov 26th** Freedom and determinism
- Vihvelin, “Compatibilism, Incompatibilism, and Impossibilism”
 - van Inwagen, *Metaphysics*, chapter 12: “The Powers of Rational Beings: Freedom of the Will”

THANKSGIVING BREAK

- Dec 3rd** Can Humeanism or pragmatism save freedom?
- Schaffer, “Causation and Laws of Nature: Reductionism”
 - Ismael, “Causation, Free Will, and Naturalism”

Supplementary Reading:

- Rea, “Presentism and Freedom” (on whether there is a conflict between presentism and free will)
- Fisher and Todd, “The Truth about Freedom” (a response to Merricks’ “Truth and Freedom”)
- Merricks, “Foreknowledge and Freedom” (a reply to Fisher and Todd’s “The Truth about Freedom”)
- Frankfurt, “Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility” (on whether we can be held responsible even if we couldn’t have done otherwise)
- Loewer, “Humean Supervenience” (an extended defense of Lewis’ view of laws)
- Beebe, “The Non-Governing Conception of Laws of Nature”
- Hawthorne, “Causal Structuralism” (a discussion of whether properties should be analyzed in terms of laws or vice versa)

Topic 8: Is there a scientific explanation of the passage of time?

Dec 5th

Entropy and Statistical Mechanics I

- Albert, *Time and Chance*, chapter 3
- North, “Time in Thermodynamics”

Dec 10th

Entropy and Statistical Mechanics II

- Albert, *Time and Chance*, chapter 4

Dec 12th

The Mentaculus: a scientific explanation of the “open future”?

- Albert, “Physics and Chance”
- Loewer, “Two Accounts of Laws and Time”

Supplementary Reading:

- Frigg, “What is Statistical Mechanics?”
- Weslake, “Statistical Mechanical Imperialism” (a critical analysis of Albert and Loewer’s work)
- Albert, *Time and Chance*, chapter 6 (on knowledge and intervention)
- Carroll, *From Eternity to Here*, chapter 10: “Recurrent Nightmares” (on a puzzling (and disturbing!) feature of statistical mechanics)