

METAPHYSICS (FALL 2008)

PHIL-201-01 – Class Number 7890 ♦ 314 Stein Hall ♦ T-Th 2-3:15pm

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Course Description

The course will address the main facets of one of the hardest and most poignant philosophical questions: What is there, really? This is an introductory course, and no previous knowledge of philosophical texts and issues is required to enroll. The course is structured as a series of lectures during which students' participation is highly encouraged. New readings are assigned for each class.

Structure and Course Requirements:

Readings and Participation: You will be expected to complete the assigned readings before the class for which they are assigned, to bring the texts under discussion with you to class, and to come to class prepared to discuss them.

Attendance: You are expected to attend each class. If you will be absent, please e-mail me in advance (aborghin@holycross.edu). The only grounds for which absences will be excused are religious holidays, family crises, or illness; absences due to the last two reasons must be explained by a note from a dean or a doctor. For each class, I keep track of students who are late. Accumulating several late arrivals will incur in a grade reduction of one third of a grade. If you have scheduling conflicts, please come see me.

Journal Assignment: During the semester, you will keep a journal for the class. This should be a way for you to keep track of the flow and progress of your thoughts during the course, and a key source for your term papers. I will collect journals two times during the semester and provide substantial feedback. Journal entries should be divided in two categories:

- (i) *Study remarks* (SR): this category will include remarks that come to you from the study of the assigned readings; it will typically contain a summary of the materials as well as questions (the latter are particularly relevant and should be then employed during class discussion). *No less than two entries (of reasonable length) per week are required.*
- (ii) *Wisdom pills* (WP): these will be your most original thoughts and questions, some of which may come out of class discussion. *No less than one entry (of reasonable length) per week is required.*

Journals will be evaluated according to the following scale:

- Excellent ⇒ 25 points;
- Good ⇒ 21 points;
- Fair ⇒ 17 points;
- Poor ⇒ 13 points.

Comprehensive Meditation: At the end of the semester, you will write a comprehensive meditation, no less than 1000 words long. The piece will highlight and connect your most noteworthy thoughts

during the course, thus summing up your most valuable class achievements. The meditation is due on December 12.

Papers: two papers, 1200 to 1600 words each. The first paper is due in class on Tuesday, October 2; the second paper is due in class on Tuesday, December 9. Papers should be typed in Times New Roman, size 12 font, double-spaced, and all the page margins should measure one inch. Paper topics will be distributed one week to ten days in advance.

Required Texts:

The following books are required:

Plato, *Parmenides*, Hackett, ISBN: 978-0872203280

Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, Cambridge, 2nd ed., ISBN: 978-0521535359

Grade Breakdown:

Journal: 25%

Comprehensive Meditation: 15%

Paper I: 20%

Paper II: 25%

Participation and mandatory lectures: 15%

Please be advised: In order to pass the class you are required to do *all* the coursework (e.g. completing one out of two papers will result in failing the class). Late papers incur in a penalty of one third of a letter grade per day (e.g. from A to A-). Finally, plagiarism, cheating, and collusion, in any form, will not be tolerated, in accordance with the *Student Handbook*.

Office Hours:

My office hours are T and Th from 4 to 6pm in 519 Smith Hall. I am also on campus at other times, and you can make an appointment to see me by e-mail (aborghin@holycross.edu). Please don't hesitate to get in touch with me about any aspect of the course.

Tentative Schedule:

Week 1

9.4 (T) Introduction

SECTION I: KNOWLEDGE AND REALITY

Week 2

9.9 (T)

Skepticism

- Montaigne, *Apology for Raymond Sebond*, excerpts (paper copies)
- Descartes, *Meditations*, Meditation I:
<http://www.wright.edu/cola/descartes/meditation1.html>

9.11 (Th)

Empiricism

- Hume, *Enquiry*, Sections 1-5 (Section 5, only part I):
<http://18th.eserver.org/hume-enquiry.html>

Week 3

9.16 (T)

Rationalism

- Plato, *Republic*, Book VII, 514-520:
http://oll.libertyfund.org/?option=com_staticxt&staticfile=show.php%3Ftitle=767&chapter=93813&layout=html&Itemid=27
- Descartes, Wax Example (Meditation II, §11-16):
<http://www.wright.edu/cola/descartes/meditation2.html>

9.18 (Th)

Anti-Realism

- Vasubandhu (E-res)

Week 4

9.23 (T)

Kant

- *Prolegomena*, Preamble and General Questions
- PAPER #1 TOPICS DISTRIBUTED

9.25 (Th)

(Class held on 10.6)

Week 5

9.30 (T)

Kant

- *Prolegomena*, Main Transcendental Question I

10.2 (Th)

Required Lecture

- Prof. Achille Varzi (Columbia): "Carving Nature at No Joints", 4pm

10.2 (Th)

Kant

- *Prolegomena*, Main Transcendental Question III

SECTION II: SPACE AND TIME

Week 6

10.6 (M) *Conceptions and Paradoxes* (Room 501 Smith, 7pm)
 ➤ Siderits: "Zeno and Nagarjuna on Motion", 1976 (Moodle)

10.7 (T) *Conceptions and Paradoxes*
 ➤ Siderits: "Zeno and Nagarjuna on Motion", 1976 (Moodle)

10.9 (Th) *Relationism vs Absolutism*
 The Leibniz-Clarke correspondence
<http://www.bun.kyoto-u.ac.jp/~suchii/leibniz-clarke.html>
PAPER #1 DUE

Week 7

10.14 (T) ACADEMIC HOLIDAY

10.16 (Th) *Relationism vs Absolutism*
 The Leibniz-Clarke correspondence
<http://www.bun.kyoto-u.ac.jp/~suchii/leibniz-clarke.html>

Week 8

10.21 (T) *Moving Spotlight Theory*
 ➤ Brad Skow, "Relativity and the Moving Spotlight Theory", ms. (Moodle)

SECTION III: PARTICULARS AND UNIVERSALS

10.23 (Th) *Nominalism*
 ➤ Quine: "On Universals", 1947 (Moodle)

Week 9

10.28 (T) *Universalism*
 ➤ Plato, *Parmenides*, Part I

10.30 (Th) *Universalism*
 ➤ Plato, *Parmenides*, Part I

Week 10

11.4 (T) *Universalism*
 ➤ Zhu Xi, "Principles and Material Force"; "The Great Ultimate" (E-res)
 ➤ Nyaya School, excerpts (E-res)

11.6 (Th) *Substances*
 ➤ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Book VII, Chapters 1-6 and 13-17:
<http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/metaphysics.7.vii.html>

Week 11

- 11.11 (T) Guest Lecture: Prof. Joe Lawrence (HC): "The One and The Many"
- 11.13 (Th) *Required Lecture*
 ➤ Prof. Alan White (Williams): "Towards a Philosophical Theory of Everything", 4pm
- 11.13 (Th) *Substances*
 ➤ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Book XII, Chapters 6, 7, 9, and 10:
<http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/metaphysics.12.xii.html>

SECTION IV: NECESSITY AND POSSIBILITY**Week 12**

- 11.18 (T) *Fundamentals*
 ➤ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Book IX, Chapters 1-7:
<http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/metaphysics.9.ix.html>
 ➤ Aristotle, *De Interpretatione*, Chapter IX:
<http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/interpretation.1.1.html>
- 11.20 (Th) *Modal skepticism*
 ➤ Quine: "Three Grades of Modal Involvement", 1953 (E-res)

Week 13

- 11.25 (T) *Actualism*
 ➤ Bob Adams: "Theories of Actuality", 1974 (E-res)
PAPER #2 TOPICS DISTRIBUTED
- 11.27 (Th) THANKSGIVING, ACADEMIC HOLIDAY

Week 14

- 12.2 (T) *Modal Realism*
 ➤ David Lewis: "Possible worlds", 1973 (E-res);
- 12.4 (Th) *Dispositionalism*
 ➤ Borghini and Williams: "A Dispositional Theory of Possibility", 2008 (Moodle)

Week 14

- 12.9 (T) Conclusions
PAPER #2 DUE
- 12.14 (S) ***Comprehensive Meditation Due***

Academic Honesty

The College Catalog (2008- 2009: 13 – 14) includes the following statement:

All education is a cooperative enterprise between teachers and students. This cooperation requires trust and mutual respect, which are only possible in an environment governed by the principles of academic honesty. As an institution devoted to teaching, learning, and intellectual inquiry, Holy Cross expects all members of the College community to abide by the highest standards of academic integrity. Any violation of academic honesty undermines the student-teacher relationship, thereby wounding the whole community. The principal violations of academic honesty are plagiarism, cheating, and collusion.

Plagiarism is the act of taking the words, ideas, data, illustrative material, or statements of someone else, without full and proper acknowledgment, and presenting them as one's own.

Cheating is the use of improper means or subterfuge to gain credit or advantage. Forms of cheating include the use, attempted use, or improper possession of unauthorized aids in any examination or other academic exercise submitted for evaluation; the fabrication or falsification of data; misrepresentation of academic or extracurricular credentials; and deceitful performance on placement examinations. It is also cheating to submit the same work for credit in more than one course, except as authorized in advance by the course instructors.

Collusion is assisting or attempting to assist another student in an act of academic dishonesty.

At the beginning of each course the teacher should address the students on academic integrity and how it applies to the assignments for the course. The teacher should also make every effort, through vigilance and through the nature of the assignments, to discourage and prevent dishonesty in any form.

It is the responsibility of students, independent of the teacher's responsibility, to understand the proper methods of using and quoting from source materials (as explained in standard handbooks such as *The Little Brown Handbook* and the *Harbrace College Handbook*), and to take credit only for work they have completed through their own individual efforts within the guidelines established by the teacher.

We expect academic honesty in this, as in all your courses. Whatever you submit to me comes with the implicit pledge that the work is your own; any request you make for an academic exception, given illness, family issues, personal problems, conflicting obligations, and the like, I expect to be based on truth. If you have any questions at all about your responsibility, please ask me.