

# Phil 252S

## Seminar on Meta-metaphysics

Professor: Sara Bernstein (sara.bernstein@duke.edu)

Special Guest: Peter van Inwagen

*Metaphysics* concerns questions about what exists: for example, do chairs really exist, or are there merely particles arranged chair-wise? What are the criteria for their existence? *Meta-metaphysics* concerns questions about the methodology and substantivity of metaphysics. For example, does reality furnish answers to metaphysical questions? If so, do we have epistemic access to the answers? Or is it our language and social conventions that give us answers to metaphysical questions? Do answers to these questions determine the substantivity of metaphysical debates?

### Required Texts:

*Metametaphysics* (ed. Wasserman and Chalmers)

### Requirements:

For undergraduate students:

- weekly well-formed questions due on Tuesdays at 6pm (20%)
- one in-class presentations on a course reading (20%)
- one 6-8 page term paper (40%)
- class participation (20%)

For graduate students:

- weekly well-formed questions due on Tuesdays at 6pm (10%)
- one in-class presentation on a course reading (10%)
- one presentation on your own term paper and term paper (60%)
- class participation (20%)

### Schedule:

Wednesday, January 19: Introduction to Metametaphysics

Ted Sider, "Ontology" (chapter 9) and "Metametaphysics" (chapter 5) from Writing the Book of the World (unpublished draft) (Blackboard)

January 26: First-Order Ontological Debates

Peter van Inwagen, Material Beings, Chapters 2 and 3 (Blackboard)  
David Lewis and Stephanie Lewis, "Holes" (Blackboard)

February 2: Ontological Realism

Ted Sider, "Ontological Realism" (MM)

February 9: Ontological Anti-Realism

David Chalmers, "Ontological Anti-Realism" (MM)  
Carrie Jenkins, "What is Ontological Realism?" (Blackboard)

February 16: Isms: Deflationism, Dismissivism, Contextualism

Karen Bennett, "Composition, Colocation, and Metaontology" (MM)  
Amie Thomasson, "Answerable and Unanswerable Questions" (MM)  
(Optional: Terry Horgan, "Blobjectivism and Indirect Correspondence")  
(Blackboard)

February 23: Being

Peter van Inwagen, "Being, Existence, and Ontological Commitment" (MM)  
Robert Merrihew Adams, "The Lightness of Being" (Blackboard)  
(Optional: W.V.O. Quine, "On What There Is") (Blackboard)

March 2: Quantifier Variance and Ways of Being

Eli Hirsch, "Quantifier Variance and Realism" (Blackboard)  
Jason Turner, "Ontological Pluralism" (Blackboard)

March 9: (Spring Break: no class)

March 16: Neo-Aristotelian Metaphysics

Jonathan Schaffer, "On What Grounds What" (MM)  
Jonathan Schaffer, "From Nihilism to Monism" (Blackboard)  
(Optional: Ted Sider, "Against Monism") (Blackboard)

March 23: Ontology and Structure

Ted Sider, "Structure" (Chapter 1) and "Primitivism" (Chapter 2) from  
Writing the Book of the World (Blackboard)

March 30: The Epistemology of Metaphysics

Rae Langton, "Elusive Knowledge of Things in Themselves" (Blackboard)  
David Lewis, "Ramseyan Humility" (Blackboard)

April 6: Methodology of the Metaphysics of Causation

Ned Hall, "Two Concepts of Causation" (Blackboard)  
Chris Hitchcock, "What's Wrong with Neuron Diagrams?" (Blackboard)

April 13: Methodology of the Metaphysics of Causation, continued

Huw Price, "Causal Perspectivalism" (Blackboard)  
Jonathan Schaffer, "Contrastive Causation" (Blackboard)

April 20: (Pacific APA, no class. Makeup session to be arranged) Student Presentations

April 27: Student Presentations

Ways to Reach Sara, or her Indistinguishable Robot Clone

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Office Hours: 201G West Duke, Tuesday 1:45-2:45pm, Thursday 1:45-2:45pm, or by appointment.