

Philosophy 111.01

Appearance and Reality: Problems in Metaphysics

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

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Metaphysics is the study of reality, and includes such awesome interrelated questions as: What is time? Is time like space? Is time travel possible? What is causation? When is something so different from its initial self that it is a different object? Are you identical to yourself across time? Do you have free will? This course will explore these and other mind bend-y problems of metaphysics.

Required Texts:

Einstein's Dreams, Alan Lightman

An Introduction to Metaphysics, John Carroll and Ned Markosian

Course Requirements: two 4-7 page papers, each worth 30%; one cumulative final exam, worth 30%; class participation, worth 10%. Extra credit opportunities will also be available. (See below.)

Schedule

Thursday, January 13: Introduction: What is metaphysics?

Time

Tuesday, January 18: Space and Time

- Taylor, "Spatial and Temporal Analogies and the Concept of Identity" (Blackboard)

- Lightman, *Einstein's Dreams* pp 8-65

Thursday, January 20: The A series and the B series of time

- J.M.E. McTaggart, "The Unreality of Time" (Blackboard)

- *IM* p. 160-167

Tuesday, January 25: Time's Passage

- Ned Markosian, "How Fast Does Time Pass?" (Blackboard)

- *IM* p. 165-167

Thursday, January 27: Eternalism and the Growing Block

- Trenton Merricks, "Goodbye Growing Block" (Blackboard)

- IM 179-183

Tuesday, February 1: Presentism

- Dean Zimmerman, "The Privileged Present: Defending the 'A Theory' of Time" (Blackboard)

Thursday, February 3: Time travel

- Robert Heinlein, "By His Bootstraps" (Blackboard)

- Robert Heinlein, "All You Zombies" (Blackboard)

Tuesday, February 8: Time travel, continued

- David Lewis, "The Paradoxes of Time Travel" (Blackboard)

Causation

Thursday, February 10: Introduction to Causation/ Is Causation Constant Conjunction?

- IM 20-27

- David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, 7.2 (Blackboard)

Tuesday, February 15: The Counterfactual Account of Causation

- David Lewis, "Causation" pp. 1-4 (Blackboard)

Thursday, February 17: The Counterfactual Account, continued; Problems with the Counterfactual Account **Paper Due.**

- IM 32-37

Tuesday, February 22: INUS Conditions

- J.L. Mackie, "Causes and Conditions" (Blackboard)

Thursday, February 24: Omissions

- Sarah McGrath, "Causation by Omission: a Dilemma", pp. 1-8

Tuesday, March 1: Transitivity

- Laurie Paul, "Aspect Causation", pp. 1-13 (Blackboard)

- IM 36-37

Composition, Constitution, and Identity

Thursday, March 3: Composition

- Peter van Inwagen, Chapter 3, *Material Beings* (Blackboard)
- IM 190-197

Spring Break

Tuesday, March 15: Composition, continued

- *Plurality of Worlds*, pp. 212-213 (Blackboard)
- IM 197-200

Thursday, March 17: Constitution

- Judith Jarvis Thomson, "The Statue and the Clay", pp. 149-154 (Blackboard)
- IM 220-222

Tuesday, March 22: Identity

- Robert M. Adams, "Primitive Thisness and Primitive Identity", pp. 1-7 (Blackboard)

Thursday, March 24: Persistence

- Sally Haslanger, "Persistence through Time", pp. 314-327 (Blackboard)

Tuesday, March 29: Personal Identity: Physical Criteria

- Bernard Williams, "The Self and the Future" (Blackboard)
- IM 103-114

Thursday, March 31: Personal Identity: Psychological Criteria

- Derek Parfit, "Personal Identity" (Blackboard)

Tuesday, April 5: Composition, Constitution, Identity Review

- IM 115-123

Free Will

Thursday, April 7: Hard Determinism

- IM 45-53

Tuesday, April 12: Hard Determinism, continued

Paper Due.

Thursday, April 14: Soft Determinism

- R.E. Hobart, "Free Will as Involving Determinism and Inconceivable Without It" (Blackboard)

Thursday, April 19: Compatibilism

- John Perry, "Compatibilist Options" (Blackboard)

Tuesday, April 21: Does It Matter If We Have Free Will?

- Susan Wolf, "The Importance of Free Will" (Blackboard)

Tuesday, April 26: Review

A few notes concerning...

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is representing another person's work as one's own. Outside works must be clearly cited or placed in quotes. Any cheating will be handled according to the university's policy on academic dishonesty. Please see the Duke University Undergraduate Honor Code for more information.

Extensions

Everyone is permitted one 24-hour paper extension. Extensions must be requested three days in advance.

Extra Credit

There will be several extra credit assignments involving outside reading and movies related to the topics discussed in class.

The assignments will involve writing a paper which compares and contrasts the themes the books and films to the themes in the reading. Extra credit will be due at the midpoint of the course (to be announced), and at the end of the course. Up to five percentage points may be earned on the extra credit.

Syllabus Changes

It is possible that topics will be added, removed, or changed on the syllabus. If this happens, it will be announced in class and over email.

Ways to Reach Sara, or her Indistinguishable Robot Clone

Email: sara.bernstein@duke.edu

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