

# Metaphysics I: The Nature of Being

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## **Overview:**

As the Mind/Body/Spirit sections of our bookshops testify, the term 'metaphysics' has, in recent popular culture, come to be associated with various mystical or occultist schools of thought such as the New Age and New Thought movements. There is now a common conception of metaphysics as the study of a number of parapsychological phenomena, ranging from psychokinesis and telepathy to faith healing, astrology and clairvoyance.

This, however, is not the 'metaphysics' that is the topic of this course. Metaphysics, in the academic sense, is a branch of philosophy that investigates the nature of the most fundamental and abstract features of reality. Metaphysicians are typically concerned with issues such as such as the nature of:

- everyday objects,
- properties,
- numbers and sets,
- necessity and possibility,
- time and space,
- laws of nature,
- identity,
- change,
- causation.

These are topics of great interest in their own right. However, it is also worth noting that these are concepts that pervade just about every single area of philosophy, be it philosophy of mind, philosophy of science, ethics or even aesthetics.

This course will present a selection of some of the main areas of metaphysical inquiry, with an eye to introducing the students to those debates that are most pertinent to other philosophical subdisciplines. It will appeal both to those who are puzzled by various fundamental philosophical issues and to those who want an essential foundation for further study in more 'applied' sectors of philosophy.

**Entrance requirements:**

There are no specific requirements. Students taking this module should however be capable of writing to a good standard of academic English. Guidance will be provided with respect to various key study skills such as critical reasoning and essay-writing. The course can also be taken as part of the Certificate in Humanities.

**Aims:**

The module aims to:

- provide students with a general understanding and appreciation of some key philosophical issues discussed in contemporary metaphysics,
- provide a general theoretical background for some of the particular issues discussed in various other courses (e.g. Metaphysics III: Philosophy of Mind).
- incite and teach students to read critically and rigorously,
- assist students in becoming confident and articulate communicators.

**Learning outcomes:**

By the end of the module students should have:

- gained a deeper insight into the nature of the world,
- come to grips with the kinds of methods involved in philosophical enquiry,
- developed a number of key transferable analytical and critical skills.

**Teaching methods:**

The module will consist in a series of lectures followed by class discussions. Students should allow time for private reading and study.

**Method of assessment:**

The course work will consist of two essays of 2.000-4.000 words each. Students should have attended at least 50% of the meetings in order to qualify for assessment.

## Coursework Titles for the Session 2005-2006

To be announced

## Submission Dates for Coursework

- Essay 1: lecture of week 7 (15th of November).
- Essay 2: lecture of week 12 (13th of December).

## Schedule and Reading:

Compulsory reading is marked with two stars (\*\*). Optional reading is marked by one (\*). Reading available for download on WebCT is marked with a diamond (◇).

### ***Week 1: Admin, Methodology & overview***

- J. Lau 'Miniguide to Critical Thinking' \*\* ◇
- J. Pryor 'Guidelines on Writing a Philosophy Paper' \*\* ◇
- J. Pryor 'Guidelines on Reading Philosophy' \*\* ◇

### ***Week 2: Properties I - Realism***

- Loux, M.J. (ed.) (2001) *Metaphysics: Contemporary Readings*. London: Routledge. Introduction to Part I: Universals. [you can ignore the stuff on Nominalism 7 Trope Theory] \*\* ◇
- Conee, E. (2005) 'Universals', in E. Conee & T. Sider *Riddles of Existence*. Oxford: OUP. [an extremely simple overview of the debate – a good place to start if you are finding the literature difficult – covers week 3 as well] \*
- Crane, T. (1995) 'Universals'. In A. C. Grayling (ed.) *Philosophy 1: a Guide through the Subject*. Oxford: OUP, pp. 204-214. [another introductory overview – covers week 3 as well] \*
- Donagan, A. (1963) 'Universals and Metaphysical Realism'. *Monist* 47: 11–246. [in favour of realism with respect to universals] \* ◇
- Loux, M.J. (2002) *Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction*, 2nd Edition. London: Routledge. Ch 1 'Universals I: Metaphysical Realism'. [a longer version of the set reading] \*
- Oliver, A. (1996) 'The Metaphysics of Universals', *Mind* 105: 1-80. [another overview, this time extremely detailed; includes some useful further references – covers week 3 as well] \* ◇

- Russell, B. (1967) *The Problems of Philosophy*. Oxford: OUP. Ch 9. Reprinted in Loux, M.J. (ed.) (2001) *Metaphysics: Contemporary Readings*. London: Routledge. [a classic defense of realism with respect to universals] \*

### **Week 3: Properties II – Nominalism & Reductive Realism**

- Loux, M.J. (2002) *Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction*, 2nd Edition. London: Routledge. Ch 2 'Universals II: Nominalism'. \*\*
- Jackson, F. (1977) 'Statements about Universals', *Mind* 86(343): 427-429. [for a very brief criticism of Austere Nominalism on the issue of abstract singular terms] \* ♦
- Quine W.V. (1954) 'On What There Is', in his *From a Logical Point of View*. Camb. MA: Harvard University Press. Also reprinted in Loux, M.J. (ed.) (2001) *Metaphysics: Contemporary Readings*. London: Routledge. [for 'Austere' Nominalism] \* ♦
- Sellars, W. (1963) 'Empiricism and Abstract Entities', in Schilpp (ed.) *The Philosophy of Rudolf Carnap*. La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1963: 431–468 [for Metalinguistic Nominalism – not covered in the lectures but this is the source if you are interested] \*
- Williams D.C. (1953) 'On the Elements of Being I'. *The Review of Metaphysics*. Reprinted in Loux, M.J. (ed.) (2001) *Metaphysics: Contemporary Readings*. London: Routledge. [for Trope Theory; overlaps with part of next week's material] \*

### **Week 4: Objects**

- Loux, M.J. (2002) *Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction*, 2nd Edition. London: Routledge. Ch 3 'Particulars I: Substrata, Bundles and Substances'. \*\*
- Allaire, E. (1963) 'Bare Particulars', *Philosophical Studies* 14(1-2): 1-8. Reprinted in Loux, M.J. (ed.) (2001) *Metaphysics: Contemporary Readings*. London: Routledge. [for substratum theory] \*
- Ayer, A.J. (1954) 'The Identity of Indiscernibles' in his *Philosophical Essays*. Reprinted in M.J. Loux (ed.) *Universals & Particulars*. NY: Anchor Books, pp217-224. [defends bundle theory; responds to Black] \*
- Black, M. (1952) 'The Identity of Indiscernibles'. *Mind* 61: 152-164. Reprinted in Loux, M.J. (ed.) (2001) *Metaphysics: Contemporary Readings*. London: Routledge. [for a criticism of the bundle theory, appealing to the principle of the identity of indiscernibles]] \*
- Casullo, A. (1988) 'A Fourth Version of the Bundle Theory', *Philosophical Studies* 54: 125-139. Reprinted in Loux, M.J. (ed.) (2001) *Metaphysics: Contemporary Readings*. London: Routledge. [as advertised] \*
- Loux, M.J. (ed.) (2001) *Metaphysics: Contemporary Readings*. London: Routledge. Introduction to Part II: Particulars. [a more succinct version of the set reading] \* ♦
- Van Cleve, J. (1985) 'Three Versions of the Bundle Theory' *Philosophical Studies* 47: 95-107. Reprinted in Loux, M.J. (ed.) (2001) *Metaphysics: Contemporary Readings*. London: Routledge. [for criticisms of the Bundle Theory + a new bundle-theoretic proposal] \*

- Wiggins, D. (1995) 'Substance'. In A. C. Grayling (ed.) *Philosophy 1: a Guide through the Subject*. Oxford: OUP, pp 214-249. [an introductory overview] \*

**Week 5: Facts and Events.**

- Loux, M.J. (2002) *Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*. London: Routledge. Ch 4 'Propositions and their Neighbours', section entitled 'Facts, States of Affairs and Events'. \*\* [skip material on propositions]
- Armstrong, D. (2001) 'Universals as Attributes', in Loux, M.J. (ed.) (2001) *Metaphysics: Contemporary Readings*. London: Routledge. Section entitled 'States of affairs' pp 74-78. [brief section urging us to endorse the existence of facts] \*
- Bennett, J. (2002) 'What Events Are', in R. Gale (ed.) *The Blackwell Guide to Metaphysics*. Oxford: Blackwell. [a good overview of the literature on events] \*
- Chisholm, R. (1976) *Person and Object*. La Salle IL: Open Court. Ch 4 [for the Chisholmian view of events] \*
- Davidson, D. (1998) 'The Individuation of Events' in Laurence & Macdonald (eds.) *Contemporary Readings in the Foundations of Metaphysics*. Oxford: Blackwell: 295–309. [for the Davidsonian view of events] \* ♦
- Kim, J. (1998) 'Events as Property Exemplifications', in Laurence & Macdonald (eds.) *Contemporary Readings in the Foundations of Metaphysics*. Oxford: Blackwell: 310–326. [for Kim's view of events as property-exemplifications] \* ♦
- Oaklander, L.N. (2005) 'Negative Facts', in E. Craig (ed.) *Routledge Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*. London: Routledge. [a brief overview of the literature on negative facts] \* ♦
- Pianesi, F. & Varzi, A. (2000) 'Events and Event-Talk: an Introduction', in J. Higginbotham, F. Pianesi, and A.C. Varzi (eds.), *Speaking of Events*, New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 3-47. [a somewhat more detailed overview of the literature on events, including a fairly heavy amount of linguistics] \* ♦
- Rodriguez-Pereira, G. (2006) 'Truthmakers', *Philosophy Compass* 1. [a good overview of the recent literature on the truthmaker argument for facts – also covers truthmakers for negative truthbearers] \* ♦
- Schneider, S. (2006) 'Events', in *The Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*. Available at <http://www.iep.utm.edu/e/events.htm> [okay open-access overview, but I think Bennett is far better] \* ♦
- Vallicella, W. F. (2000) 'Three Conceptions of States of Affairs'. *Nous* 34(2): 237-259. [an overview of various views on the nature of facts] \* ♦

- Wetzel, T. (2003) 'States of affairs', in E. Zalta (ed.) *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2003/entries/states-of-affairs/>>. [a somewhat detailed overview of the literature on states of affairs; skip section 3, which is covered in the next lecture] \*

**Week 6: Modality: Necessity and Possibility.**

- Loux, M.J. (2002) *Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*. London: Routledge. Ch 5. \*\* ♦
- Ayer, A.J. (1936) *Language, Truth and Logic*, London: Gollancz. Ch 4 [for a classic presentation of conventionalism] \*
- Blackburn, S. (1986) 'Morals And Modals', in G. Macdonald, ed., *Fact, Science And Morality* (Oxford: Blackwell), 119- 141. [for Blackburn's 'quasi realism'] \*
- Lewis, D. (2001) 'Possible Worlds', in Loux, M.J. (ed.) *Metaphysics: Contemporary Readings*. London: Routledge. [for modal realism] \*
- Lewis, D. (1986) *On the Plurality of Worlds*. London: Blackwell. Chapter 1, section 1.5. 'Modal Realism at Work: Properties' [for Lewis' possible world version of the properties-as-sets-of-objects view] \*
- Loux, M.J. (ed.) (2001) *Metaphysics: Contemporary Readings*. London: Routledge. Introduction to Part III: Possible Worlds. [a more succinct version of the set reading] \*
- Melia, J. (2003) *Modality*. Chesham: Acumen. [excellent and fairly accessible, albeit book-length, overview of the debates] \*
- Plantinga, A. (2001) 'Actualism and Possible Worlds' in Loux, M.J. (ed.) *Metaphysics: Contemporary Readings*. London: Routledge. [for actualism] \*
- Rosen, G. (1990) 'Modal Fictionalism', *Mind* 99(395): 327-354 [for modal fictionalism] \*
- Sider, T. (2003) 'Reductive Analyses of Modality', in Loux, M.J. and Zimmerman D.W. (eds.) *The Oxford handbook of metaphysics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. [another extremely clear review article albeit covering \*considerably\* more ground than the Loux chapter] \*♦
- Stalnaker, R. (1976) 'Possible Worlds', *Nous* 10(1): 65–75 [a clear overview of the work on possible worlds with a presentation of Stalnaker's own views] \*♦
- Van Inwagen, P. (1986) 'Two Concepts of Possible Worlds', *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* **11**: 185-213. [discussion of Plantinga vs Lewis] \*

**Week 7: Reduction and Supervenience.**

- Klee, R. (1997) *Introduction to the Philosophy of Science*. Oxford: OUP. Ch 5 'Reductionism, Anitreductionism and Supervenience' \*\* ♦
  
- Bickle, J. (2003) 'Multiple Realisability', in E. Zalta (ed.) *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. [overview of the 'multiple realisability' debate] \* ♦
  
- Blackburn, S. (1998) 'Supervenience', in the *Routledge Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*. London & New York: Routledge. [a very brief overview of the concept of supervenience] \* ♦
  
- Fodor, J.A. (1974) 'Special Sciences - or the Disunity of Science as a Working Hypothesis', *Synthese* 28: 97-115. [for the 'multiple realisability' argument against the reduction of special science properties] \*
  
- Fodor, J. (1997) 'Special Sciences: Still Autonomous after all These Years'. *Philosophical Perspectives* 11: 149-163. [replies to Kim (1992)] \* ♦
  
- Kemeny, J. and Oppenheim, P. (1956) 'On Reduction', *Philosophical Studies* 7: 6-18. [for a discussion of Nagel's account and an alternative proposal]
  
- Kim, J. (1992) 'Multiple Realization and the Metaphysics of Reduction', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 52: 1-26. [discussion of the multiple realisability argument] \* ♦
  
- Kim J. (1998) 'Problems of Reduction', in the *Routledge Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*. London & New York: Routledge. [another overview of the issue of reduction] \* ♦
  
- Kim, J. (2003) 'Supervenience, Emergence, Realization, Reduction', in *the Oxford Handbook on Metaphysics*, ed. M. Loux and D. Zimmerman, Oxford University Press. [for another good overview of the issues] \*
  
- Nagel, E. (1961) *The Structure of Science*, New York: Harcourt Brace. Ch 11. [for an early account of reduction] \*
  
- O'Connor, T. and H.Y. Wong (2003) 'Emergent Properties' in E. Zalta (ed.) *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* [broad overview of the literature on emergence] \* ♦
  
- Van Gulick, R. 2001). 'Reduction, Emergence and Other Recent Options on the Mind/Body Problem: A Philosophic Overview', *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 8(9-10):1-34. [another general survey article, with emphasis on the Philosophy of Mind] \* ♦

**Week 8: Counterfactual Conditionals.**

- Doring F. (1998) 'Counterfactual conditionals'. In E. Craig (Ed.), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. London: Routledge [a very basic overview] \*\* ♦
  
- Bennett, J. (2003) *A Philosophical Guide to Conditionals*. Oxford: OUP. Chs 10-21 [a very detailed intermediate-to-advanced-level overview – far more material here than can be assimilated in a week.

Chs 10-19 cover the Lewis-Stalnaker accounts, Ch 20 covers Goodman-style accounts and Ch 21 Compares the two]

- Edgington, D. (1995) 'On Conditionals', *Mind* 104(414): 235-329. Sections 1, 3, 4 [a long overview that deals with both indicative and counterfactual conditionals; covers Goodman-style accounts] \* ♦
- Goodman, N. (1947) 'The Problem of Counterfactual Conditionals', *The Journal of Philosophy*, 44(5): 113-128. [for Goodman's original presentation of his account] \* ♦
- Lewis, D.K. (1973) *Counterfactuals*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. [for Lewis' original presentation of his account] \*
- Lowe, E. J. (2002) *A Survey of Metaphysics*. Oxford: OUP. Ch 8 'Counterfactual conditionals' [a slightly more advanced overview than the set reading; doesn't cover Goodman-style accounts] \* ♦
- Stalnaker, R. (1968) 'A Theory of Conditionals', *Studies in Logical Theory: American Philosophical Quarterly Monograph Series 2*: 98–112; repr. in W.L. Harper, R. Stalnaker and G. Pearce (eds) *IFS: Conditionals, Belief, Decision, Chance, and Time*, Dordrecht and Boston, MA: Reidel, 1981, 41–56. [Stalnaker's account in his own words] \* ♦

#### **Week 9: Laws of Nature.**

- Bird, A. (1998) *Philosophy of Science*. London: UCL Press. Ch 1 'Laws of Nature'. \*\* ♦
- Armstrong, D.M. (1983) *What is a Law of Nature?* Cambridge: CUP. [excellent book-length treatment of the topic] \*
- Carroll, J. W. (1990) 'The Humean Tradition', *The Philosophical Review* 99(2): 185-219. [a nice overview of various variants on the regularity view] \*
- Carroll, J. W. (2003) 'Laws of Nature', in E. Zalta (ed.) *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* [a good general overview] \* ♦
- Dretske, F. (1977) 'Laws of Nature', *Philosophy of Science* **44(2)**: 248-268. [defends a necessitarian account] \* ♦
- Earman and Roberts, (1999) 'Ceteris Paribus There Are No Provisos', *Synthese* **118** 439- 478. [for the debate on ceteris paribus clauses]
- Lange, M. (1993) 'Natural Laws and the Problem of Provisos', *Erkenntnis* **38** 233-248. [for the debate on ceteris paribus clauses]
- Lewis, D. (1978) *Counterfactuals*. Camb. Mass: Harvard University Press. pp 73-75. [classic defense of a systems version of the regularity account]
- Pietroski and Rey, (1995) 'When Other Things Aren't Equal: Saving Ceteris Paribus Laws from Vacuity', *Brit. J. Phil. Sci.* **46** 81-110. [for the debate on ceteris paribus clauses]



- Swartz, N. (2006) 'Laws of Nature', in the *Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*. [another basic overview] \* ♦
- Van Fraassen, B. (1989) *Laws and Symmetry*. Oxford: OUP. pp.19-23 [argues for eliminativism about laws] \*

### **Weeks 10 & 11: Causation 1 & 2.**

- Menzies, P. (2001) 'Counterfactual Theories of Causation' in E. Zalta (ed.) *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Sections 1-3 (skip 4. recent developments) [overview of Lewis' 1986 account and some of the objections thereto] \*\* ♦
- Hall, N. & L. A. Paul (forthcoming) *Causation and its Counterexamples: A Traveler's Guide*. Oxford: OUP. [a book-length overview of the literature on causation, including material from Hall and Paul (2003) - excellent but somewhat detailed for this course] \* ♦
- Hall, N. & L. A. Paul (2003) 'Causation and Preemption', in P. Clark and K. Hawley (eds.) *Philosophy of Science Today*. Oxford: OUP. [overview of the literature on regularity/counterfactual accounts and counterexamples involving causal preemption – a great paper] \*
- Kim, J. (1973) 'Causes and Counterfactuals', *Journal of Philosophy* 70:570-572. [for a criticism of Lewis (1973)] \* ♦
- Lewis, D. (1973) 'Causation', *Journal of Philosophy* 70: 556-67. [for Lewis's counterfactualist account] \* ♦
- Lewis, D. (1986) 'Postscripts to 'Causation'', in his *Philosophical Papers: Volume II*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. [further – important – elaborations on Lewis' views] \* ♦
- Lewis, D. (2000) 'Causation as Influence', *Journal of Philosophy* 97: 182-97. [Lewis's final attempt] \* ♦
- Ramachandran, M. (1997) 'A Counterfactual Analysis of Causation' *Mind* 106: 263-77. [an attempt to amend the counterfactualist account to cope with various problems] \* ♦
- Schaffer, J. (2000) 'Trumping Preemption', *Journal of Philosophy* 97: 165-81. [introduces trumping preemption as a counterexample to Lewis' account] \* ♦

### **Week 12: Dispositions.**

- Mumford, S. (2005). Dispositions. In E. Craig (Ed.), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. London: Routledge. [introductory overview of the issues] \* \* ♦
- Bird, A. (1998), 'Dispositions and Antidotes', *The Philosophical Quarterly* 48: 227–234. [presents a counterexample to the conditional analysis] \* ♦

- Bird, A. (2005) 'The Dispositionalist Conception of Laws'. *Foundations of Science* **10**: 353-370. [a nice, clear presentation of dispositional essentialism] \* ♦
- Lewis, D. (1997) 'Finkish dispositions', *The Philosophical Quarterly* **47**: 143-58. [offers a revised version of the simple conditional analysis] \* ♦
- Martin, C. B. (1994) 'Dispositions and Conditionals', *Philosophical Quarterly* **44**: 1-8. [introduces 'finkish' dispositions as counterexamples to the simple conditional analysis] \* ♦
- McLaughlin (1994) 'Dispositions,' in J. Kim and E. Sosa (eds.) *A Companion to Metaphysics*. Oxford: Blackwell: 120-123. [another introductory overview – a little dated]
- Ryle, G. (1949) *The Concept of Mind*, London: Hutchinson. Ch 5 'Dispositions and Occurrences' [offers a simple conditional analysis of dispositions] \* ♦
- Shoemaker, S. (1984) 'Causality and Properties', in his *Identity, Cause, and Mind*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 206-233. [an early defense of dispositional essentialism] \*