

PHIL 180/280 Metaphysics
Spring 2015
MW 11:00-12:30 Encina Hall C464

Contact information

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Office hours: room 90-92K, T 1-3pm & by appointment

Course description

It seems undeniable that things in the world have certain features, or *properties*: some apples are *red*, my cat is *soft*, the Golden Gate Bridge is *2,737 meters long*, and so on. This course will focus on metaphysical issues in properties. The topics include ontic issues in properties (universals vs. tropes, realism vs. nominalism), particulars (tropes and bundle theory), and the nature of properties (quantities and causal essentialism).

Prerequisites

This course requires the skill to read, critically assess, discuss, and write about the arguments presented in course readings. As such, prerequisites include PHIL 80 and PHIL 50 (or equivalent), or permission of the instructor.

Course requirements

Undergraduate students have the option of (i) writing two short papers (due at the end of weeks 5 and 10), (ii) writing one short paper (due at the end of week 5) and taking a final exam (take-home at the end of week 10), or (iii) writing a longer paper (due at the end of week 10). Graduate students should submit a longer paper (due at the end of week 10).

Attendance policy

Please do not arrive late in class. Attendance in class is required starting week 2, with an allowance of two unexcused absences. Do not take this course if you expect to be frequently absent.

Resources

Readings will be uploaded on Coursework. See also this useful overview of the topic:

<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/properties/>

Disability accommodation

Students who have a disability which may necessitate an academic accommodation or the use of auxiliary aids and services in a class must initiate the request with the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). The OAE will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend appropriate accommodations, and prepare a verification letter dated in the current academic term in which the request is being made. Please contact the OAE as soon as possible: timely notice is needed to arrange for appropriate accommodations. The OAE's contact details are as follows.

Address: 563 Salvatierra Walk, Stanford, CA 94305

Phone: (650) 723-1066

Web address: <http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/oea>

Honor code and plagiarism policy

Students are not merely bound by Stanford University's Honor Code. It is also their responsibility to know what the Honor Code states. Students unfamiliar with the Honor Code should consult the following site:

<http://www.stanford.edu/dept/vpsa/judicialaffairs/guiding/honorcode.htm>

(Read this page and download the PDF.) Students are also responsible for knowing what constitutes plagiarism. If you are unsure about what counts as plagiarism, ask the instructor.

Schedule of readings

Properties: universal or particular?

David Armstrong (1989), *Universals: An Opinionated Introduction*, Chapter 1, §1

Earl Conee (2014), 'Universals', chapter 8 of Conee and Sider, *Riddles of Existence*

Nominalism

David Armstrong (1978), *Universals and Scientific Realism Volume 1: Nominalism and Realism*, chapter 2, §1-5

W.V. Quine (1948), 'On What There Is'

Sparseness

David Armstrong (1989), *Universals: An Opinionated Introduction*, chapter 5, §1&2

David Lewis (1983), 'New Work for a Theory of Universals'

Ted Sider (1995), 'Sparseness, Immanence, and Naturalness'

Natural kinds

Katherine Hawley and Alexander Bird (2011), 'What are Natural Kinds?'
Richard Boyd (1991), 'Realism, Anti-Foundationalism, and the Enthusiasm for Natural Kinds'

Race and gender

Joshua Glasgow (2009), *A Theory of Race*, chapter 5
Charlotte Witt (2011), *The Metaphysics of Gender*, chapters 1 and 4

Properties and particulars I

Peter Simons (1984), 'Particulars in Particular Clothing: Three Trope Theories of Substance'
Laurie Paul (2012), 'Building the World from its Fundamental Constituents'

Properties and particulars II (Guest lecturer Tom Donaldson)

John Burgess (2005), 'Being Explained Away'
Shamik Dasgupta (2009), 'Individuals: An Essay in Revolutionary Metaphysics'

Quantities

Brent Mundy (1987), 'The Metaphysics of Quantity'
John Bigelow and Robert Pargetter (1988), 'Quantities'
Maya Eddon (2013), 'Fundamental Properties of Fundamental Properties'

Causal essentialism I

Sydney Shoemaker (1980), 'Causality and Properties'
Brian Ellis and Caroline Lierse (1994), 'Dispositional Essentialism'

Causal essentialism II

John Hawthorne (2001), 'Causal Structuralism'
Stephen Barker (2013), 'The Emperor's New Metaphysics of Powers'