

Metaphysics: ontology, modality, metametaphysics

Dr. Jacob Archambault

Course Description

This course provides an introduction to metaphysics. After a preliminary examination of the question of what metaphysics is, we examine in turn:

- the characterization of material beings as composites of matter and form, and its impact on the understanding of the metaphysical project;
- essence and nature; their relation to necessity;
- Aristotle's division of being into ten categories; recent attempts at providing a taxonomy of types;
- privation and non-being;
- The division of beings into potency and act; its implications for understanding modality.

After engaging in these metaphysical investigations, we return to a more sustained examination of what metaphysics is. The course closes with an examination of the names of being among the early Greeks. Through the course, the student shall have attained a broad and deep understanding of the nature and central problems of metaphysics, and their relevance for understanding a wide variety of phenomena.

Course Requirements

Reading summaries (50%) – each class meeting, the student shall have the opportunity to provide a summary, no more than one page, of the structure and contents of the reading for that day. The student shall be required to hand in *five* summaries throughout the semester, and may choose to hand in a sixth for extra credit. Summaries for the day's lesson will be collected at the beginning of class, and graded on their quality and content.

Final paper (50%) – The student shall write a paper on a metaphysical topic of his/her interest of no more than 5000 words, to be approved by the instructor. Due at the end of the semester.

Texts

All texts will be provided.

Syllabus

Week 1	Thomas Aquinas, <i>Sententia Libri Metaphysicae</i> , prologue.	Quine, W. V. O (1948). On What there Is.
Week 2	Fine, Kit (2003). The Non-Identity of a Material Thing and Its Matter.	Almotahari, Mahrhad (2014). The Identity of a Material Thing and Its Matter.
Week 3	Aristotle, <i>Metaphysics Z</i> , 1028a 10-1029b 12.	Heidegger, Martin (1939). On the Essence and Concept of <i>phusis</i> , Aristotle's <i>Physics B</i> , 1.
Week 4	Aristotle, <i>Metaphysics Z</i> , 1029b 12-1031a 14.	Fine, Kit (1994). "Essence and Modality" <i>Philosophical Perspectives</i> 8, 1-16.

Week 5	Thomas Aquinas, <i>De Ente et Essentia</i> 1.	Thomas Aquinas, <i>De Ente et Essentia</i> 1.
Week 6	Aristotle, <i>Metaphysics</i> Z, 1031a 15-1032a 11.	Thomas Aquinas, <i>De Ente et Essentia</i> 5.
Week 7	Sommers, Fred (1963). Types and Ontology, sec. 1-2.	Sommers, Fred (1963). Types and Ontology, sec. 3.
Week 8	Sommers, Fred (1963). Types and Ontology, sec. 4, appendix.	Aristotle, <i>Metaphysics</i> Θ, 1045b 27-1046a 35.
Week 9	Heidegger, Martin (1929). What is Metaphysics?	Aristotle, <i>Metaphysics</i> Θ, 1046a 36-1048a 24.
Week 10	Aristotle, <i>Metaphysics</i> Θ, 1048a 25-1049b 3.	Aristotle, <i>Metaphysics</i> Θ, 1049b 4-1051a 3.
Week 11	Carnap, Rudolph (1950). Empiricism, Semantics, and Ontology.	Bergson, Henri (1903). <i>Introduction to Metaphysics</i> , 21-49.
Week 12	Bergson, Henri (1903). <i>Introduction to Metaphysics</i> , 49-62.	Heidegger, Martin. (1951). <i>Logos</i> (Heraclitus, Fragment 50).
Week 13	Heidegger, Martin (1952). <i>Moirai</i> (Parmenides, Fragment VIII, 34-41).	Heidegger, Martin. <i>Aletheia</i> (Heraclitus, Fragment 16).