

Metaphysics
Philosophy 650, Fall 2018

Office hours updated 30 August 2018

Instructor: Ben Caplan
Time: T Th 1:00–2:15 PM
Location: 1007 Wescoe Hall
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Description

We will talk about the metaphysics of statues, numbers, and the Supreme Court. We will also talk about the metaphysics of gender, race, and disability. Along the way we will probably talk about topics like parthood, time, and modality; objects, properties, and relations; and essence, form, and matter.

Requirements

Short writing assignment	10%
Problem set	20%
First paper	30%
Final paper	40%

The short writing assignment should be less than a page. The first paper should be about 3 or 4 pages. The final paper should be about 5–7 pages.

Due dates will be announced in class and via Blackboard. Due dates for the short writing assignment will be announced at least five days in advance (e.g. the Thursday before a Tuesday). Due dates for the problem set and the first paper will be announced at least one week in advance.

The final paper will be due at 4 PM on Wednesday, 12 December 2018.

There is some overlap in content between this course and Philosophy 850 (Spring 2018). If you have taken Philosophy 850 (Spring 2018), you'll need to coordinate with me to make sure that your work for this course does not overlap your work for that course.

Readings

Readings are available on Blackboard. Sometimes we will carefully read small amounts of text. This will make more sense if you have the relevant text in front of you in class.

Grading

Numbers will be converted to letter grades using the following scheme.

94–100	A
90–93	A–
87–89	B+
84–86	B
80–83	B–
77–79	C+
74–76	C
70–73	C–
67–69	D+
64–66	D
60–63	D–
0–59	F

Numbers will be rounded up or down in the conventional way (e.g. 83.4 is rounded down to 83, and 83.6 is rounded up to 84).

I won't be using Blackboard to calculate your grades; rather, I'll be using my own spreadsheet. If you're curious about your grade at any point, just ask or email me.

Prerequisite

Introduction to Symbolic Logic (Philosophy 310), or an equivalent course, is a prerequisite or a corequisite of a prerequisite or a corequisite. (That is, it is a pre- or co-requisite of Analytic Philosophy (Philosophy 388), which is a pre- or co-requisite for this course.) I might use some notation from symbolic logic (e.g. $\exists xFx$ or $a=b$), and I will explain it when I introduce it if I do, but you might find this course easier if you have already taken Introduction to Symbolic Logic.

Academic misconduct

The university policy on academic misconduct is set out in Article II, Section 6 of the University Senate Rules and Regulations. Examples of academic misconduct include (but are not limited to) “giving or receiving of unauthorized aid on ... assignments,” “knowingly misrepresenting the source of any academic work,” and “plagiarizing another's work.” Penalties for academic misconduct include receiving a failing grade for the course, being suspended from the university, and being expelled. For further details, see policy.ku.edu/governance/USRR#art2sect6.

Accessibility

I'm committed to making this class as accessible as possible. If you have any particular accommodation requests, please speak to me as soon as possible.

Electronic devices

You are permitted to use laptops and other electronic devices in class, since some students prefer taking notes, or reading texts, on such devices.

However, students report that they find laptop use in class distracting. This includes laptop use by their peers.¹ (If you're browsing social media during class, you might find it interesting. So, apparently, might those around you.) More importantly, "the level of laptop use was negatively related to several measures of student learning, including ... overall course performance," which is to say that (generally speaking), the more students used laptops in class, the worse their final grades were.²

If you use a laptop or other electronic device in class, please try to sit somewhere where your screen is less likely to be visible to others.

Concealed carry

If you carry a concealed handgun, familiarize yourself both with the relevant state and federal laws and with KU's weapons policy. See concealedcarry.ku.edu/information.

Schedule

A detailed and updated schedule will be posted on Blackboard.

There is no class on Tuesday, 16 October 2018 (Fall Break). There is also no class on Thursday, 22 November 2018 (US Thanksgiving).³

¹ Carrie B. Fried, "In-Class Laptop Use and Its Effects on Student Learning," *Computers and Education* 50.3 (April 2008): 906–914.

² Fried, "In-Class Laptop Use and Its Effects on Student Learning," p. 906.

³ The class will not meet on Canadian Thanksgiving (8 October 2018), but that's because it's a Monday.

Tentative outline

The outline is tentative. I might make changes, depending on what we're interested in and how things go. I'll announce changes in class and via Blackboard.

Statues, numbers, and the Supreme Court

Judith Jarvis Thomson, "The Statue and the Clay," *Noûs* 32.2 (June 1998): 149–173, esp. 149–154.

Ernest Sosa, "Subjects Among Other Things," *Philosophical Perspectives* 1 (1987): 155–187, esp. 173–178.

Ali Akhtar Kazmi, "Parthood and Persistence," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* Supplementary Vol. 16 (1990): 227–250, esp. 245–250.

Karen Bennett, "Spatiotemporal Coincidence and the Grounding Problem," *Philosophical Studies* 118.3 (April 2004): 339–371, esp. 339–342.

Kathrin Koslicki, "Towards a Hylomorphic Solution to the Grounding Problem," *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* 82 (2018): 333–364.

Byeong-uk Yi, "Numbers and Relations," *Erkenntnis* 49.1 (July 1998): 93–113.

Gabriel Uzquiano, "The Supreme Court and the Supreme Court Justices: A Metaphysical Puzzle," *Noûs* 38.1 (March 2004): 135–153.

Gabriel Uzquiano, "Groups: Toward a Theory of Plural Embodiment," *Journal of Philosophy* (forthcoming), esp. 1–7, 21–23, 28–29.

Gender, race, and disability

Charlotte Witt, "What Is Gender Essentialism?," in *Feminist Metaphysics: Explorations in the Ontology of Sex, Gender and the Self*, ed. Charlotte Witt (Dordrecht: Springer, 2011), 11–25.

Sally Haslanger, "Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them To Be?," *Noûs* 34.1 (March 2000): 31–55.

Katharine Jenkins, "Amelioration and Inclusion: Gender Identity and the Concept of *Woman*," *Ethics* 126.2 (Jan. 2016): 394–421.

Chike Jeffers, "The Cultural Theory of Race: Yet Another Look at Du Bois's 'The Conservation of Races'," *Ethics* 123.3 (April 2013): 403–426.

Esa Díaz-León, "In Defence of Historical Constructivism about Races," *Ergo* 21.2 (2015): 547–562.

Elizabeth Barnes, *The Minority Body: A Theory of Disability* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), ix-xii, 2–6, 9–13, 38–48.