

PH251-15 Metaphysics

22/23

Department

Philosophy

Level

Undergraduate Level 2

Credit value

15

Assessment

100% coursework

Study location

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

Description

Introductory description

Metaphysics is the most general attempt to make sense of things. Though it is perhaps the oldest branch of the discipline, contemporary metaphysics is a vibrant and exciting subject. In this module, students are introduced to a number of different puzzles in contemporary metaphysics, and to some attempted solutions to these puzzles. Students will be encouraged to think for themselves about the puzzles and about philosophers' attempts to solve them.

Module aims

The module aims to give students a good critical understanding of a number of core topics in contemporary metaphysics. The module will fall into broadly two sections. The first part of the module will focus on a number of questions about ordinary objects, like trees and cats. We will discuss questions about the identity of objects over time, and some traditional paradoxes about material constitution (the statue and the piece of clay). In the second part of the module we will turn to questions about the nature of persons and questions about personal identity over time. Various views about personal identity will be explored, including psychological continuity theories and animalism.

Outline syllabus

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

Core topics:

1. Substance
2. Identity over time
3. The paradox of material constitution
4. Personal identity and the self

Plus some of the following:

1. Time
2. Processes and events
3. Complex objects and their parts
4. The nature of metaphysics

Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- Understand, analyse and apply key theoretical approaches in contemporary metaphysics, and explain the issues at stake in debates between them.
- Identify and assess different argumentative strategies used in metaphysics to address specific questions, and articulate central theoretical concepts that inform different answers to those questions.
- Develop and defend their own judgement about competing views in metaphysics, and express themselves clearly and with precision.

Indicative reading list

Many of the key texts will be taken from the anthology:

Jaegwon Kim, Daniel Korman and Ernest Sosa (eds.) *Metaphysics: An Anthology*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2012).

Additional illustrative bibliography:

Michael J. Loux, and Thomas Crisp, *Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction*, 4th edition, (London: Routledge, 2017)

Ted Sider, John Hawthorne and Dean Zimmerman, *Contemporary Debates in Metaphysics*, (Oxford, Blackwell, 2008)

Katherine Hawley, *How Things Persist*. (Oxford: O.U.P., 2001)

Ted Sider, *Four-Dimensionalism: An Ontology of Persistence and Time* (Oxford, O.U.P., 2001)

David Wiggins, *Sameness and Substance Renewed* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001)

Eric Olson, *The Human Animal: Personal Identity without Psychology* (Oxford. O.U.P., 1997).

Subject specific skills

Students will be challenged to scrutinize their everyday conceptions of such things as 'material objects' and to defend these ordinary conceptions in the face of philosophical challenges (for example, the argument from temporary intrinsics or the paradoxes of material constitution). This

will require close attention to a number of closely related arguments that exploit commonsense ideas about identity to arrive at radical conclusions. We will look at these arguments carefully to attempt to diagnose the problems and to creatively respond. Students will be encouraged to then apply these ideas about identity to the literature about persons and the problem of personal identity over time.

Transferable skills

Students will learn skills of close reading, analysis and creative problem-solving. They will develop and defend their own judgement about competing views in metaphysics. They will develop the ability to express themselves clearly and with precision in written and oral work.

Study

Study time

Type	Required
Lectures	9 sessions of 2 hours (67%)
Seminars	9 sessions of 1 hour (33%)
Total	27 hours

Private study description

Private study, seminar preparation and reading.

Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

Assessment

You do not need to pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Students can register for this module without taking any assessment.

Assessment group A2

	Weighting	Study time
1000 word essay	20%	
2500 word essay	80%	

Feedback on assessment

Feedback provided on unassessed essay midway through term and on assessed essay if submitted
as final assessment method. General feedback in form of examiners report given on exam.

Availability

Courses

This module is Core for:

- Year 3 of UPHA-VL78 BA in Philosophy with Psychology
- Year 4 of UPHA-VL79 BA in Philosophy with Psychology (with Intercalated year)

This module is Optional for:

- Year 2 of UMAA-GV19 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy with Specialism in Logic and Foundations
- UPHA-VQ72 Undergraduate Philosophy and Literature
 - Year 2 of VQ72 Philosophy and Literature
 - Year 3 of VQ72 Philosophy and Literature
- Year 4 of UPHA-V7MM Undergraduate Philosophy, Politics and Economics (with Intercalated year)

This module is Core option list A for:

- UMAA-GV18 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy with Intercalated Year
 - Year 4 of GV18 Mathematics and Philosophy with Intercalated Year
 - Year 4 of GV18 Mathematics and Philosophy with Intercalated Year

This module is Option list A for:

- UMAA-GV17 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy
 - Year 3 of GV17 Mathematics and Philosophy
 - Year 3 of GV17 Mathematics and Philosophy
 - Year 3 of GV17 Mathematics and Philosophy
- UMAA-GV18 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy with Intercalated Year
 - Year 4 of GV18 Mathematics and Philosophy with Intercalated Year
 - Year 4 of GV18 Mathematics and Philosophy with Intercalated Year
- UMAA-GV19 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy with Specialism in Logic and Foundations
 - Year 3 of GV19 Mathematics and Philosophy with Specialism in Logic and Foundations
 - Year 4 of GV19 Mathematics and Philosophy with Specialism in Logic and Foundations

This module is Option list B for:

- Year 2 of UHIA-V1V5 Undergraduate History and Philosophy
- Year 3 of UMAA-G106 Undergraduate Mathematics (MMath) with Study in Europe

- UMAA-GV17 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy
 - Year 2 of GV17 Mathematics and Philosophy
 - Year 2 of GV17 Mathematics and Philosophy
 - Year 2 of GV17 Mathematics and Philosophy
- UMAA-GV18 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy with Intercalated Year
 - Year 2 of GV18 Mathematics and Philosophy with Intercalated Year
 - Year 2 of GV18 Mathematics and Philosophy with Intercalated Year
- Year 2 of UMAA-GV19 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy with Specialism in Logic and Foundations