

Metaphysics (PHIL 293)
Spring 2008

Wednesdays and Fridays 2:20–3:30
Memorial Hall 303

Professor: Dr. Catherine Sutton
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 & gladly by appointment

Course Description

The Greek philosopher Aristotle called metaphysics “first philosophy” because it investigates the most primary questions in our pursuit of wisdom. In our survey of metaphysics, we will study what it is that makes you the same person over time: When you were a child, both your body and your psychology were much different than they are today. So what makes you the same person as (identical to) that child? Next we will study the classic metaphysical question of whether we have free will, or whether our actions are determined by a series of physical causes that lead up to those actions. Other topics include the nature of time and the nature of things that *could* have happened but did not (for example, it might have happened that you were never born).

Course Goals

- Students will strengthen their ability to read and analyze complex texts and philosophical arguments.
- Students will learn to identify metaphysical questions (and differentiate them from scientific questions and from epistemological questions, for example).
- Students will learn tools and methods for answering metaphysical questions.
- Students will sharpen their philosophical skills by writing and revising a polished term paper.

Required Texts

Contemporary Debates in Metaphysics, edited by Theodore Sider, John Hawthorne, and Dean Zimmerman (Blackwell Publishing, 2008).

Four Views on Free Will, by John Martin Fischer, Robert Kane, Derk Pereboom, and Manuel Vargas (Blackwell Publishing, 2007).

Required Readings on Reserve at Reeves Library

John Locke, "Of Identity and Diversity," in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book II, Chapter 27, sections 1–8. On reserve at Reeves Library, in the book *Personal Identity* by John Perry, pages 33–52. (Also available in any copy of Locke's *Essay* or online at earlymoderntexts.com.)

Thomas Reid, "Of Mr. Locke's Account of Our Personal Identity." On reserve at Reeves Library, in the book *Personal Identity* by John Perry, pages 113–118.

Jorges Borges' short story, "The Library of Babel." On reserve at Reeves Library, in either of the two collections of Borges' stories on reserve.

Recommended Resources

The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy, at Reeves Library, Reference Main Level, B41 .C35 1999

This is more of an encyclopedia than a dictionary. It has excellent, concise overviews of the philosophical questions that we will be studying, such as *personal identity* and *time*. It provides definitions of technical terms that will arise in the class, such as *space-time* and *mereology*.

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, <http://plato.stanford.edu/>

This source is more in-depth than the *Cambridge Dictionary*. It is written by top philosophy professors, and it is a reputable and reliable online source.

Assignments

Reading quizzes, homework, and in-class assignments 15%
Short paper 15% (7.5% each draft)
First exam 15%
Class presentation 10%
Long paper 30% (15% each draft)
Final exam 15%

Grading scale

Assignment and course grades sometimes include an element of qualitative judgment by the instructor.

94↑=A (Excellent)	74=C (Satisfactory)
90=A-	70=C-
87=B+	67=D+
84=B (Good)	64=D (Poor)
80=B-	60=D-
77=C+	Below 60=F

Paper Submission Guidelines

Papers should be typed and double-spaced, with standard margins and font size, unless otherwise specified. Number the pages of your papers, and staple your paper before turning it in. Cite your sources using MLA, APA, or another standard citation style.

Late papers may be docked ten points for the first day and five points for each additional day. If you need an extension because of extenuating circumstances, make arrangements with the professor as soon as possible.

Attendance

If you are absent from class, you are responsible for finding out from classmates what you missed—including notes, announcements, and copies of materials. In-class quizzes and assignments cannot be made up; these grades are a type of participation grade. If you turn in an assignment late because of an absence, the assignment grade will be docked a late penalty. If you have special circumstances for an absence, make arrangements with the professor as soon as possible.

Plagiarism and Collaboration

The standard penalty for plagiarism or other cheating is an F for the assignment or an F for the course. Plagiarism cases are reported to Moravian's Academic Affairs Office, who may impose other penalties as appropriate to the offense.

Become familiar with the Academic Honesty Policy in the student handbook. If you have questions about the policy or about what counts as plagiarism and what is fair use, please ask so that you are confident about what is and is not permissible.

In this course, students may work together by giving one another *feedback* on papers and other writing. Of course, students may not have someone else do the revising or writing for them. Students may also get feedback from the Moravian College Writing Center. To make an appointment, call 610-861-1592 or stop by the Writing Center on the second floor of Zinzendorf Hall. The Writing Center now offers evening appointments (Sundays through Wednesdays) at Reeves Library. Sign up for those appointments at the Reference Desk.

Students with Disabilities

Reasonable accommodation will be provided on a case-by-case basis to students with documented disabilities. Students who would like accommodations for learning disabilities or ADD/ADHD should meet with Mrs. Laurie Roth in the Office of Learning Services. Students who would like accommodations for other disabilities should meet with Dr. Ronald Kline in the Counseling Center. The student should then speak to the instructor so that appropriate academic accommodations can be made.

Metaphysics, Spring 2008

Course and Assignment Calendar Subject to revision by the instructor

Class 1: What is metaphysics?

Class 2: Introduction to personal identity

Due: Read John Locke, "Of Identity and Diversity," in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book II, Chapter 27, sections 1–8. On reserve at Reeves Library, in the book *Personal Identity* by John Perry, pages 33–39. (Also available in any copy of Locke's *Essay* or online at earlymoderntexts.com.)

Class 3: History of personal identity debates: John Locke

Due: Read John Locke, "Of Identity and Diversity," sections 9–27. On reserve at Reeves Library, in the book *Personal Identity* by John Perry, pages 39–52. (Also available in any copy of Locke's *Essay* or online at earlymoderntexts.com.)

Class 4: John Locke, his critics, and his legacy; *Staying Alive* (personal identity game)

Due: Read Thomas Reid, "Of Mr. Locke's Account of Our Personal Identity." On reserve at Reeves Library, in the book *Personal Identity* by John Perry, pages 113–118.

Class 5: Contemporary debates on personal identity

Due: Read Judith Jarvis Thomson, "People and Their Bodies," in *Contemporary Debates in Metaphysics*, pages 155–163 (to the end of section V)

Class 6: Personal identity

Due: Short paper on personal identity (3–5 pages)

Class 7: Personal identity

Due: Read Judith Jarvis Thomson, "People and Their Bodies," in *Contemporary Debates in Metaphysics*, pages 163–174

Class 8: Personal identity

Due: Read Derek Parfit, "Persons, Bodies, and Human Beings," in *Contemporary Debates in Metaphysics*, pages 177–186 (to end of section 2)

Class 9: Personal identity

Due: Revised short paper on personal identity

Class 10: Personal identity

Due: Read Derek Parfit, "Persons, Bodies, and Human Beings," in *Contemporary Debates in Metaphysics*, pages 186–196 (sections 3 through 6)

Class 11: Personal identity

Due: Read Derek Parfit, "Persons, Bodies, and Human Beings," in *Contemporary Debates in Metaphysics*, pages 196–205

Class 12: Exam on personal identity
Due: Prepare for exam

Class 13: Introduction to possible worlds
Due: Read Jorges Borges' short story, "The Library of Babel." On reserve at Reeves Library, in either of the two collections of Borges' stories on reserve.

Class 14: Introduction to the free will debate
Due: Read "A Brief Introduction to Some Terms and Concepts" in *Four Views on Free Will*, pages 1–4

Class 15: Free will: libertarianism
Due: Read Robert Kane, "Libertarianism," in *Four Views on Free Will*, pages 5–22 (to the end of section 5)

Class 16: Free will: libertarianism
Due: Read Robert Kane, "Libertarianism," in *Four Views on Free Will*, pages 23–42
Class 17: Free will: compatibilism (soft determinism)
Due: Read John Martin Fischer, "Compatibilism," in *Four Views on Free Will*, pages 44–61 (to the end of section 5)

Class 18: Free will: compatibilism (soft determinism)
Due: Read John Martin Fischer, "Compatibilism," in *Four Views on Free Will*, pages 61–82

Class 19: Free will: hard determinism (hard incompatibilism)
Due: Read Derk Pereboom, "Hard Incompatibilism," in *Four Views on Free Will*, pages 85–103 (to the end of section 6)

Class 20: Free will: hard determinism (hard incompatibilism)
Due: Read Derk Pereboom, "Hard Incompatibilism," in *Four Views on Free Will*, pages 103–124

Class 21: Student presentations
Due: Choose one philosopher from the free will debate (Kane, Fischer, or Pereboom). Read the responses to that philosopher's work by the other philosophers in chapters 5, 6, and 7. For example, if you choose Kane, you will skip chapter 5 (Kane's chapter) and read Fischer's response to Kane in chapter 6 and Pereboom's response to Kane in chapter 7.

Class 22: Student presentations
Due: presentation on chosen response to Kane, Fischer, or Pereboom

Class 23: Paper workshop
Due: Term paper—bring two copies of your paper

Class 24: Introduction to philosophy of time

Due: Read Dean Zimmerman, "The Privileged Present: Defending an 'A-Theory' of Time," pages 211–224

Class 25: Philosophy of time

Due: Revised term paper

Class 26: Philosophy of time

Due: Read J. J. C. Smart "The Tenseless Theory of Time," pages 226–237

Class 27: Course review and wrap-up; exam prep

Exam week: Final exam