

## Philosophy 351: Metaphysics and Epistemology

Fall 2008 Syllabus

Prof. Clare Batty

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Office Hours: Tues. 9:00 – 10:30, Wed. 1:00 – 2:30, or by appointment

### Prerequisites

None. But you must be prepared to engage with some difficult contemporary material.

### Course Description

This is an upper-level undergraduate course in contemporary metaphysics and epistemology.

**Metaphysics** is the area of philosophy that deals with the question: what is there and what is it like? Our focus will be on the topics of universals and particulars, persistence through time and personal identity. The questions we will be looking at include:

*Does reality contain universal features (e.g. redness) as well as particular entities (e.g. roses)?*

*What is the relation between a thing and its qualities? Are objects simply bundles of qualities or is there something more that grounds these qualities?*

*What is required for the survival of a thing over time? For example, what makes you the same person today as the person who first enrolled at the University of Kentucky?*

**Epistemology** is the area of philosophy that deals with the question: what is the nature of knowledge and reasonable belief? We will concentrate on the topics of skepticism, the definition of knowledge and the nature of justification. The questions we will be looking at include:

*Do we know anything about the external world?*

*What conditions must be met in order to possess knowledge?*

*What makes it the case that we are justified in having certain beliefs?*

### Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course, a student should be able to do the following:

- **explain** different contemporary issues and views in metaphysics and epistemology;
- **analyze and critically evaluate** the arguments for these positions; and
- **construct** clear philosophical prose that addresses these issues.

### Required Readings

*Metaphysics: Contemporary Readings*, Michael J. Loux (ed.), New York: Routledge (2005). **(M)**

*Knowledge: Readings in Contemporary Epistemology*, Sven Bernecker & Fred Dretske (eds.), Oxford: OUP (2000). **(E)**

I have ordered both for the bookstores.

Recommended secondary reading:

*Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction*, Michael J. Loux, New York: Routledge (2006). **(CIM)**

*What Is This Thing Called Metaphysics?*, Brian Garrett, New York: Routledge (2006). **(G)**

*Epistemology*, Richard Feldman, New Jersey: Prentice Hall (2003). **(F)**

*Epistemology: A Contemporary Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge*, Robert Audi, New York: Routledge (2003) **(CIE)**

**All except (G) will be on reserve in the Young Library.** You may pick up, and then photocopy, selections of (G) from the folder on my office door. Please put the original back in the folder when you have finished your photocopying.

## **Reading Assignments**

Reading, discussing and writing about the assigned readings are the central activities of this class. There is a reading assignment for each week, typically a paper or two from the two required anthologies. ***Your careful preparation of the readings is crucial.*** The readings in both anthologies are often short but always quite difficult: expect to read everything at least twice. They require close study, and you should not put them off until the last minute. If you have trouble understanding what an author says, or any other question concerning the course, please do not hesitate to ask.

## **Requirements**

**3 papers** (5-6 pages): 20% each (60%)

**Final exam:** 20%

**Class participation:** 20% (Evaluation will be based on **attendance**, preparation, contribution to discussion and submission of readings questions prior to each week's lectures—see below.)

**Lateness policy:** It is disruptive to class when students come in late. If you are more than 10 minutes late, you will be marked as 'absent'—although you may stay as long as you take a seat close to the door.

**Guidelines for reading questions: This short assignment is due every Monday by 8pm (STRICTLY ENFORCED).**

You must submit a question (or two) to exhibit that you have done the reading and that you have thought about the material enough to have some kind of response to it. It can be an 'I don't understand' question; but it must be an *informed* 'I don't understand' question. It must diagnose *why* you are confused, not just *that* you are confused. The point of these exercises is for you to develop the ability to ask good questions. That sounds easy, but it is not. And the ability to ask good, hard questions is central to the philosophical enterprise. Please be aware that I will notice if your questions consistently deal with the beginning sections of the assigned articles. **\*\*Questions MUST be submitted via the form on the course website ([www.clarebatty.com](http://www.clarebatty.com)).**\*\*

## **Policy on Late Assignments**

Papers handed in late will be penalized by the equivalent of one grade point per calendar day, unless you can document a medical or other valid reason for why your assignment is late. If you turn an assignment in late, you must give it to me in person or e-mail it to me.

## **Plagiarism**

Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated in this course. Plagiarism means taking the words and thoughts of others (their ideas, concepts, images, sentences, and so forth) and using them as if they were your own, without crediting the author or citing the source. Other forms of academic dishonesty include: cheating on exams, double submission of papers, aiding dishonesty, and falsification of records. If in doubt about what counts as plagiarism, or about how to properly reference a source, consult me. At this and most other universities, plagiarism is taken very seriously and will be punished in accordance with the UK Policy on Disposition of Academic Offenses. If you are tempted to plagiarize because you are in crisis, it is always better to speak to your professor, your advisor, the counseling center, or another trusted authority on campus who can help you handle the crisis.

For more information on plagiarism, and how to avoid it, see:

<http://www.uky.edu/Ombud/Plagiarism.pdf>

[http://wps.prenhall.com/hss\\_understand\\_plagiarism\\_1/0,6622,427064-,00.html](http://wps.prenhall.com/hss_understand_plagiarism_1/0,6622,427064-,00.html)

For a statement on UK's Policy on Disposition of Academic Offenses, see:

[http://www.chem.uky.edu/research/grossman/acadoffenses/new\\_policy.pdf](http://www.chem.uky.edu/research/grossman/acadoffenses/new_policy.pdf)

## **Getting Help**

I am here to help you. Feel free to email me with any questions about the material or the assignments, or come and visit me during office hours. You may also make an appointment with me outside of office hours.

## **Web Resources**

See Jim Pryor's Guidelines on reading and writing philosophy papers:

<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/reading.html>

<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>

Useful glossaries are Jim Pryor's Philosophical Terms and Methods:

<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/vocab/index.html>.

**Classroom and Learning Accommodations**

Any student with a disability who is taking this course and needs classroom or exam accommodations should contact the Disability Resource Center, 257-2754, room 2 Alumni Gym, [jkarnes@uky.edu](mailto:jkarnes@uky.edu).

## Tentative Schedule

Handouts for lectures will be distributed in class and then posted online. This schedule is tentative. We will alter it if need be.

**WEEK 1** (Aug. 28)

### **Introduction and Preliminaries**

No readings

**WEEK 2** (Sept. 2, 4)

### **Universals: Metaphysical Realism**

Readings: Loux, Introduction to Part I, Universals (M)  
Russell, "The World of Universals" (M)  
*Recommended:* Chapter 1 (CIM)  
Chapter 3 (G)

**WEEK 3** (Sept. 9, 11)

### **Universals: Nominalism**

Readings: Price, "Universals and Resemblances" (M)  
*Recommended:* Chapter 2 (CIM)  
Chapter 3 (G)

### **FIRST PAPER TOPICS HANDED OUT THURSDAY SEPT. 11**

**WEEK 4** (Sept. 16, 18)

### **Particulars**

Readings: Loux, Introduction to Part II, Particulars (M)  
Black, "The Identity of Indiscernibles" (M)  
*Recommended:* Chapter 3 (CIM)  
Chapter 3 (G)

**WEEK 5** (Sept. 23, 25)

### **Persistence**

Readings: Loux, Introduction to Part V, Endurantism and Perdurantism (M)  
Heller, "Temporal Parts of Four-Dimensional Objects" (M)  
*Recommended:* Chapter 8 (CIM)

### **FIRST PAPER DUE THURSDAY SEPT. 25**

**WEEK 6** (Sept. 30, Oct. 2)

### **Persistence (cont'd)**

Readings: Heller (cont'd)  
Merricks, "Endurance and Indiscernibility" (M)

**WEEK 7** (Oct. 7, 9)

### **Personal Identity**

Readings: Parfit, "Personal Identity" (M)  
Lewis, "Survival and Identity" (M)  
*Recommended:* Chapter 8 (G)

### **SECOND PAPER TOPICS HANDED OUT THURSDAY OCT. 9**

**WEEK 8** (Oct. 14, 16)

### **Personal Identity (cont'd)**

Readings: Lewis (cont'd)  
Swinburne, "Personal Identity: The Dualist Theory" (M)  
*Recommended:* Chapter 8 (G)

**WEEK 9** (Oct. 21, 28)

**Introduction to Epistemology: Skepticism**

Readings: Ayer, selections from *Language, Truth and Knowledge* (handout)  
Descartes, selections from the *Meditations* (handout)  
Unger, "A Defense of Skepticism" (E)  
*Recommended:* Chapter 6 (F)  
Chapter 10 (CIE)

**SECOND PAPER DUE THURSDAY OCT. 28**

**WEEK 10** (Oct. 28, 30)

**Skepticism**

Readings: Nozick, "Knowledge and Scepticism" (E)  
Lewis, "Elusive Knowledge" (E)  
*Recommended:* Chapter 6 (F)  
Chapter 10 (CIE)

**WEEK 11** (Nov. 6)

**The Definition of Knowledge**

Readings: Plato, selections from the *Theatetus* (handout)  
Gettier, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?" (E)  
Goldman, "A Causal Theory of Knowing" (E)  
*Recommended:* Chapter 2 (F)  
Chapter 8 (CIE)

**THIRD PAPER TOPICS HANDED OUT THURSDAY NOV. 6**

**WEEK 12** (Nov. 11, 13)

**The Definition of Knowledge** (cont'd)

Readings: Goldman (cont'd)  
Lehrer & Paxson, "Knowledge: Undefeated Justified True Belief" (E)  
*Recommended:* Chapter 3 (F)  
Chapter 8 (CIE)

**WEEK 13** (Nov. 18, 20)

**Justification: Externalism**

Readings: Armstrong, "The Thermometer-Model of Knowledge" (E)  
Goldman, "Discrimination and Perceptual Knowledge" (E)  
*Recommended:* Chapter 5 (F)  
Chapter 7 (CIE)  
Chapter 8, pp. 238-245 ("Internalism and Externalism in Epistemology")

**THIRD PAPER DUE THURSDAY NOV. 20**

**WEEK 14** (Nov. 25)

**Catch up**

**WEEK 15** (Dec. 2, 4)

**Justification: Internalism**

Readings: Chisolm, "The Indispensability of Internal Justification" (E)  
Bonjour, "The Elements of Coherentism" (E)  
*Recommended:* Chapter 4 (F)  
Chapter 7 (CIE)

**WEEK 16** (Dec. 9, 11)

**Justification: Compromises**

Readings: Alston, "An Internalist Externalism" (E)  
*Recommended:* Chapter 7 (CIE)