

PHILOSOPHY 305: METAPHYSICS

What Are We? The Metaphysics of Human Persons

Instructor: Evan T. Woods
Classroom: Knapp Hall 204
Time: Monday and Wednesday 1:30–2:50
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INTRODUCTION

Perhaps nothing seems as familiar to you as your own self, but a moment's reflection is liable to make the familiar puzzling. We begin with something that might seem obvious: you exist. *But what kind of thing are you?* Call this *the personal ontology question*. After dismissing dualist answers to the question, we investigate materialist answers. However, as we'll see, these answers are threatened by *the problem of the many*. This problem undermines a familiar view of ourselves according to which we are persisting, free, and ontologically special. Furthermore, it has been argued that the problem supports dualist answers to the personal ontology question. Can materialist answers be maintained? We conclude with an investigation of the metaphysics of death and its relation to different answers to the personal ontology question and the problem of the many.

READINGS

All readings will be posted on Notebowl. They are also linked to on the schedule of readings below.

METHOD OF EVALUATION

Your grade will be determined according to the following weighting of assignments:

Take-home Exam: 15% Due March 13

Final Exam: 15% On May 11

Paper 1: 30% Due April 10

Paper 2: 40% Due May 6

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY

The students and faculty of Denison University and the Department of Philosophy are committed to academic integrity and will not tolerate any violation of this principle. Academic honesty, the cornerstone of teaching and learning, lays the foundation for lifelong integrity. Academic dishonesty is, in most cases, intellectual theft. It includes, but is not limited to, providing or receiving assistance in a manner not authorized by the instructor in the creation of work to be submitted for evaluation. This standard applies to all work ranging from daily homework assignments to major exams. Students must clearly cite any sources consulted - not only for quoted phrases but also for ideas and information that are not common knowledge. Neither ignorance nor carelessness is an acceptable defense in cases of plagiarism. It is the student's responsibility to follow the appropriate format for citations.

Any instances of suspected plagiarism or academic dishonesty will be immediately reported to Associate Provost of Academic Affairs. Those guilty of academic dishonesty will receive a failing grade for the course

ELECTRONICS POLICY

To ensure a learning environment with minimal distractions, no electronic devices (e.g., laptops and smartphones) are to be used in class except in the accommodation of documented learning issues or when otherwise indicated (e.g., during course evaluations).

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Class attendance and participation are required. Absences will be recorded. Students with more than three unexcused absences will receive no marks for participation in the course. Constructive participation will positively impact your grade. For those who are disinclined to speak in class, discussion during office hours constitutes constructive participation. Participation grades will be determined by the extent to which your constructive participation contributes to the aims and environment of the course. Any reading quizzes count toward participation.

LATE OR MISSED ASSIGNMENTS POLICY

If you are unable to submit an assignment or write an exam at the scheduled time and date, you are responsible for notifying me prior to the date of the exam or assignment. If you have a documented reason (e.g., a doctor's note) for being unable to write an exam or submit an assignment at the scheduled time and date, you are allowed to reschedule the exam or assignment and write it as soon as possible. You are responsible for contacting me to reschedule. If you have no documented reason or fail to notify me, you will receive a zero for the exam or assignment.

DISABILITY SERVICES

Any student who feels he or she may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately as soon as possible to discuss his or her specific needs. I rely on the Academic Resource Center (ARC) in 020 Higley to verify the need for reasonable accommodations based on documentation on file in that office.

SCHEDULE¹

Date	Readings
January 21: Course Introductions	Syllabus
January 23	W.V.O. Quine, " On What There Is "
January 28: No Class—MLK Jr. Day, Observed	
January 30	
What Am I?	
February 4: Persons and Dualism	René Descartes, selections from Discourse on Method and Meditations
February 6: Against Dualism	Elisabeth of Bohemia, Elisabeth to Descartes and Peter van Inwagen, Excerpts from <i>Metaphysics</i>
February 11	
February 13: Animalism	Eric T. Olson, " An Argument for Animalism "
February 18	
February 20: No Class—Central APA	
February 25: Constitutionalism	Lynne Rudder Baker, " Animalism v. Constitutionalism "
February 27	
March 4: The Problem of the Many	Peter Unger, Excerpts from " The Problem of the Many "
March 6	
How Do I Persist?	
March 11: Persistence and Mental Continuity	John Locke, " On Identity and Diversity "
March 13	Take-home Exam due
March 18: No Class—Spring Break	
March 20: No Class—Spring Break	
March 25: Persistence and Bodily Continuity	Judith Jarvis Thompson, " Persons, Bodies, and Human Beings "
March 27	
April 1: The Problem of Ontological Trash	Mark Johnston, " Personites, Maximality, and Ontological Trash "
April 3	
Am I Free?	
April 8: The Problem of Too Many Willers	Hud Hudson, Excerpts from <i>A Materialist</i>

¹ Note that this schedule is provisional and is subject to change. Changes will be announced via e-mail and an announcement on Notebowl.

	<i>Metaphysics of the Human Person</i> Paper 1 due
April 10: Back to Dualism?	Peter Unger, Excerpts from “ The Mental Problem of the Many ”
April 15	
April 17: Escape?	Will Bynoe and Nicholas K. Jones, “ Solitude Without Souls: Why Peter Unger Hasn’t Established Substance Dualism ”
What Happens to Us?	
April 22: Is death a harm?	Lucretius, Excerpt from De Rerum Natura and Thomas Nagel, Excerpts from “ Death ”
April 24	Bernard Williams, Excerpts from “ The Makropulous Case: Reflections on the Tedium of Immortality ”
April 29	
May 1: Surviving death?	Lynne Rudder Baker, “ Material Persons and the Doctrine of Resurrection ”
May 6: Animalism, again	Eric T. Olson: “ Animalism and the Corpse Problem ” Paper 2 due
May 11: 2:00PM – 4:00PM	Final Exam