

## Topics in Metaphysics: Metaphysics and Metaphilosophy

Professor Peter Unger      Fall Semester 2011      Thursdays, 2:00 to 4:00 PM

The course will be organized around the typescript of a book that Professor Unger has been writing, *Beyond Emptiness*. This typescript is available on Unger's NYU Webpage. Reading will be from these sources: 1. That typescript, 2. An Anthology, *Metaphysics: The Big Questions*, eds, Peter van Inwagen and Dean Zimmerman, available at the NYU Book Center, 3. Photo-copies distributed in class, 4. The Internet.

Here is the course plan, which we may follow fairly flexibly:

Week 1    For discussion in class, read chapter 1 of *Beyond Emptiness*, henceforth, BE. This chapter is: How Empty is Mainstream Philosophy.

Week 2    For discussion in class, first read some photo-copied material distributed in the first class: 1. The Introduction to Peter van Inwagen's textbook, *Metaphysics*. 2. A selection from van Inwagen's *Material Beings*. These materials will dovetail nicely with chapter 1 of BE, which you'll have already read by this time. As well, read chapter 2 of BE, Some Varieties of Concretely Substantial Philosophy, at least the first 4 of that chapter's 7 sections.

Week 3    For discussion in class, first read all of BE's chapter 2. Then read these two selections from *Metaphysics: The Big Questions*, henceforth, MBQ. 1. 52, David Lewis, "Modal Realism at Work: an Excerpt from *On the Plurality of Worlds*" 2. 60, Derek Parfit, "Why Anything? Why This?"

Week 4    For discussion in class, read BE's chapter 3, Thinkers and What They Can Think About, focusing especially on the first four of the chapter's ten sections. Along with that, read these items, distributed in class 3: 1. Donald Davidson, "Knowing One's Own Mind", 2. Selection from Hilary Putnam, "The Meaning of 'Meaning'", 3. Selection from Hilary Putnam, *Reason, Truth and History*.

Week 5    Again read BE's chapter 3, but now focusing section's 5-10, the remaining sections of the chapter. Along with this, read a selection from Professor Unger's *All the Power in the World*, comprising pages 239-286 of the book.

Week 6    Read BE's Chapter 4, The Origins of Material Individuals, focusing most on sections 1-6 of the chapter. As well, read Selection from Saul Kripke, Lecture III, in his *Naming and Necessity*, distributed in the Week 5 class.

Week 7    Again read BE's Chapter 4, but now focusing most on sections 7-10, the remaining sections of that chapter. As well, in MBQ read 54, Saul Kripke, "Identity and

Necessity". And, read the selection from Christopher Hughes, *Kripke: Names, Necessity and Identity*, distributed in a previous class session.

Week 8 Read BE's chapter 5, The Persistence of Material Individuals, focusing on sections 1-5. Along with that, read Roderick Chisholm, "Identity through Time", distributed in the previous week's class.

Week 9 Again read BE's chapter 5, but now focusing on sections 6 and 7, the remaining sections of the chapter. Along with that, read parts of the entry in a valuable internet resource, the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Identity over Time, namely, part 1, the Introduction and part 4, Diachronic Identity Puzzles. (This entry is authored by Harold Noonan.)

Week 10 Read BE's chapter 6, Empty Debates about Material Matters, focusing on sections 1-5 of the chapter. Along with that, read the chapter on Individuality from van Inwagen's textbook metaphysics, distributed in the prior week's class session. As well, read Eli Hirsch, "Against Revisionary Ontology" *Philosophical Topics*, 2002, available from the e-journals of the NYU Library, as a pdf doc.

Week 11 Again read BE's chapter 6, now focusing on sections 6-10, the remaining sections of the chapter. Along with that, read Ted Sider's "Against Parthood" available from his personal web site as a pdf doc. In this piece, read from page 1 to page 29, not more.

Week 12 Read the first two sections of BE's chapter 7, Worlds, Properties and Times. As well, in MBQ, read 6, H. H. Price, "Universals and Resemblances", 7, D. C. Williams, "The Elements of Being", and a selection from Stephen Schiffer, *The Things We Mean*, and "Pleonastic Properties", to be distributed in the previous class session.

Week 13 Read sections 3 through 5 of chapter 7. Along with that, in MBQ read 27, David Lewis "In Defense of Stages", 28, David Lewis "The Problem of Temporary Intrinsic", 12, A. N. Prior, "The Notion of the Present", 16, A. N. Prior, "Some Free Thinking about Time", and 29, Dean W. Zimmerman, "Temporary Intrinsic and Presentism". As well, read J. J. C. Smart, "The Space-Time World", to be distributed in the previous week's class session.

Week 14 Again read chapter 7, focusing on sections 3 through 5. As well, read Kit Fine, "In Defense of 3-Dimensionalism", *The Journal of Philosophy*, 2006, to be distributed in the previous class session. Also, in MBQ, read 48, Peter van Inwagen, The Mystery of Metaphysical Freedom. As well, read Peter Unger, "Free Will and Scientiphicalism", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 2002, available through JSTOR.