

**Topics in Metaphysics: Metaphysics and Metaphilosophy Fall Semester 2014**  
**Professor Peter Unger** **Thursdays, 11:00 AM to 1:00PM**

The course will be organized around Professor Unger's new book, *Empty Ideas*, published in July of this year, 2014. Students may buy a copy at half the standard price, as an author can get his or her own books inexpensively, and pass the savings on to students. Readings will be from these following sources: 1. That book. 2. An Anthology, *Metaphysics: The Big Questions*, Eds, Peter van Inwagen and Dean Zimmerman, available at the NYU Book Center, 3. Photocopies distributed in class, or scanned and sent by email, and 4. The Internet.

Students will write two papers for the course, one to be submitted at the beginning of week 9, the other to be submitted within a week of the last class meeting for the course. Details of these papers will be discussed well before the papers are due.

Here is the plan that, flexibly enough, we will follow. As early experience in the course indicates, later parts of the plan may be subject to change.

Week 1 For discussion in class, if you can get your hands on the material, read chapter 1 of *Empty Ideas*, henceforth, EI.

Week 2 For discussion in class, first read some photocopied 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*, to be distribute in class or by email.
3. A selection in *Metaphysics: The Big Questions*, henceforth, MBQ; Selection 52, David Lewis, "Modal Realism at Work: an Excerpt from On the Plurality of Worlds"

Then read, or re-reread, Chapter 1 of EI and, for the first time, read EI's chapter 2.

Week 3 For discussion in class,

1. First re-read all of EI's Chapter 2. Then read:
2. In MBQ, Selection 48, Peter van Inwagen, The Mystery of Metaphysical Freedom.
3. Peter Unger, "Free Will and Scientiphicalism", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 2002, available through JSTOR. (Draft is on Unger's NY Webpage.)
4. Available from Oxford Scholarship Online, Donald Davidson, "Knowing One's Own Mind", as in his *Subjective, Intersubjective, Objective*, Oxford University Press, 2002.
5. Then read Chapter 3 of EI, but ONLY pages 47 through 55.

Week 4 For discussion in class, read:

1. First, Selection from Hilary Putnam, "The Meaning of 'Meaning'", to be provided.
2. Then, Selection from Hilary Putnam, *Reason, Truth and History*, to be provided.
3. Then, all of Chapter 3 of EI.

Week 5. For discussion in class read:

1. Selection from Saul Kripke, *Naming and Necessity*, to be provided.
2. Then Chapter 4 of EI.
3. Secondary literature on *Naming and Necessity*, to be provided.

Week 6. For discussion in class read:

1. Chapter 5 of EI.
2. Kit Fine, "Coincidence and Form," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume*, Volume LXXXII, 2008, available through JSTOR.

Week 7 For discussion in class read:

1. L. A. Paul, "The Puzzles of Material Constitution", *Philosophy Compass*, Volume 5, Number 7, pages 579-570. Available through NYU Libraries.
2. Amie L. Thomasson, "The Controversy Over the Existence of Ordinary Objects," *Philosophy Compass*, Volume 5, Number 7, pages 591-601. Use NYU Libraries.
3. Chapter 6 of EI, including the Appendix to that Chapter.

Week 8 For discussion in class read in MBQ:

1. Selections from David Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds*, to be provided.
2. Selection 4, Bertrand Russell "Universals: an Excerpt from *The Problems of Philosophy*".
3. Selection 5, David M. Armstrong, "Universals as Attributes: An Excerpt from *Universals: An Opinionated Introduction*".
4. Selection 7, D. C. Williams, "The Elements of Being".
5. Then read Chapter 7 of EI, but, for this week, only pages 160-169 and 179-186

Week 9 For discussion in class read in MBQ:

1. Selection 12, A. N. Prior, "The Notion of the Present".
2. (Not in current MBQ) J. J. C. Smart, "The Space-Time World", to be provided.
3. Selection 16, A. N. Prior, "Some Free Thinking about Time".
4. Selection 27, David Lewis "In Defense of Stages".
5. Selection 28, David Lewis "The Problem of Temporary Intrinsic".
6. Selection 29, Dean W. Zimmerman, "Temporary Intrinsic and Presentism".
7. Selections from David Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds*, to be provided.
8. Then read all of Chapter 7 of EI (or what's not yet been read in the Chapter).

Week 10 For discussion in class read in MBQ:

1. Selection 36, Sydney Shoemaker, "Personal Identity: A Materialist Account".
2. Selection 38, Derek Parfit, "Divided Minds and the Nature of Persons".
3. Selection 35, Roderick Chisholm, "Which Physical Thing Am I?" And Then Read:
4. Chapter 8 of EI, up through at least page 211.

Week 11 For discussion in class read:

1. Eli Hirsch, "Kripke's Argument Against Materialism," in Robert C. Koons and George Bealer, eds. *The Waning of Materialism*, Oxford University Press, 2010, Essay 5.
5. Use the pdf from Oxford Scholarship Online, available from NYU Libraries.

2. Dean Zimmerman "From Property Dualism to Substance Dualism" *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume*, Vol. 84, Issue1, pages 119-150, available through NYU Libraries.
3. Read all of Chapter 8 of EI.

Week 12. For discussion in class:

1. Reread in MBQ Selection 52, David Lewis, "Modal Realism at Work: an Excerpt from *On the Plurality of Worlds*".
2. Then read some further selections from *On the Plurality of Worlds*, to be provided.
3. Then read in MBQ Selection 60, Derek Parfit, "Why Anything? Why This?"
4. Then read in MBQ Selection 61, Richard Swinburne, "Response to Derek Parfit".
5. Then, read Chapter 9 of EI, but ONLY pages 223-234.
6. Then read, Chapter 1 of Timothy Williamson, *Modal Logic as Metaphysics*, Oxford University Press, 2013, pdf from Oxford Scholarship Online, through NYU Libraries.

Week 13. For discussion in class read:

1. Galen Strawson, "Realistic Monism: Why Physicalism Entails Panpsychism," in Galen Strawson, *Real Materialism and Other Essays*, Oxford University Press, 2008. Use pdf from Oxford Scholarship Online, through NYU Libraries.
2. David J. Chalmers, "The Combination Problem for Panpsychism," unpublished essay, available at: <http://consc.net/papers/comboption.pdf>
3. Read all of Chapter 9 of *Empty Ideas*, the final chapter of the book.

Week 14. For discussion in class read:

1. Chapter 1 of Timothy Williamson, *Modal Logic as Metaphysics*, Oxford University Press, 2013, pdf from Oxford Scholarship Online, through NYU Libraries.
2. Takashi Yagasawa, Review of Timothy William, *Modal Logic as Metaphysics*, in Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews, on the internet at: <http://ndpr.nd.edu/news/43612-modal-logic-as-metaphysics/>  
Do NOT worry about the many technical points in either Williamson's Chapter or Yagasawa's Review of the book.
3. Galen Strawson, The Introduction to his *Real Materialism and Other Essays*, Oxford University Press, 2008. Use pdf from Oxford Scholarship Online, but reading just pages 1-10 of this pdf.

It may be that we will cover what's listed above in more than 14 weeks, or in less. *And, possibly, we may skip the material listed for some week, or for some weeks.*

In any case, we will make sure to read and discuss, well before the end of the course, absolutely all of the body of *Empty Ideas*.

If, in light of this book, the material for some week, or weeks may look dreary, we may turn to discuss certain questions about how some metaphysical matters may bear on, or may intersect with, certain questions of value. And, in line with that, we may go to discuss, yet further afield, what sorts of psychological investigations may illuminate our thinking on these questions of value.