

Syllabus
Philosophy 191-02: Metaphysics of Material Objects
Fall 2009-2010

Dr. Brian Epstein
Mon. 6:30-9:00, Miner 224

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Office hours: Wednesdays 4:15-5:30; Thursdays 4-5, and by appointment, Miner 114B

The Course:

This seminar will focus on a central issue in contemporary metaphysics: the nature of material objects. We will examine in detail theories of the relation between an object and its parts, the essential properties of material objects, and the persistence of objects over time.

Required texts:

Material Constitution: A Reader, edited by Rea

Persistence: Contemporary Readings, edited by Haslanger and Kurtz

Schedule:

Introducing the Problem of Coincidence

Introduction to the class

Mon., Sep. 14: Background

The problem of coincidence

Sep. 21 to be rescheduled:

Rea, Introduction, MC

Wiggins, "On Being in the Same Place at the Same Time," MC Ch. 1

Doepke, "Spatially Coinciding Objects," MC Ch. 2

Persistence

Perdurantism

Sep. 28 to be rescheduled:

Sider, "Four Dimensionalism," PCR Ch. 4

Sider, "All the World's a Stage," PCR Ch. 5

On temporal parts

Mon., Oct. 5:

Thomson, "Parthood and Identity Across Time," PCR Ch. 7

*More problems for temporal parts; endurance***TUES., Oct. 13:**

Haslanger, "Persistence, change, and explanation," PCR Ch. 8

Inwagen, "Four-dimensional objects," PCR Ch. 12

*More on endurance***Mon., Oct. 19:**

Hinchcliff, "The Puzzle of Change," PCR Ch. 16

Markosian, "A Defense of Presentism," PCR, Ch. 17

Optional:

Sider, "Presentism and Ontological Commitment," PCR Ch. 19

Zimmerman, "Temporary Intrinsic and Presentism," PCR Ch. 20

Sider, "The Stage View and Temporary Intrinsic," PCR Ch. 22

Back to Coincidence*Competing reactions***Mon., Oct. 26:**

Burke, "Copper Statues and Pieces of Copper: A Challenge to the Standard Account,"
reader

Johnston, "Constitution is not Identity," MC Ch. 4

Noonan, "Constitution is Identity: A reply to Mark Johnston," reader

Mon., Nov. 2:

Zimmerman, "Theories of Masses and Problems of Constitution," reader

Mon., Nov. 9:

Burke, "Preserving the Principle of One Object to a Place," MC Ch. 12

Thomson, "The Statue and the Clay," reader

*Theorizing about constitution***Mon., Nov. 16:**

Baker, Persons and Bodies, Chs. 1 and 2, reader

Reviews by Zimmerman, Sider, Pereboom

Baker, replies

Wasserman, "The Constitution Question," reader

Mon., Nov 23:

Fine, "The Non-Identity of a Thing and its Matter," reader

King, "Semantics for Monists," reader

Frances, "The New Leibniz's Law Arguments for Pluralism," reader

Fine, "Arguing for Non-Identity: A response to King and Frances," reader

Nov. 25 HAPPY THANKSGIVING!*The grounding problem***Mon., Nov. 30:**

"Supervenience," Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy

Sider, “Global Supervenience and Identity Across Times and Worlds,” reader
Wasserman, “The Standard Objection to the Standard Account,” reader

Wed., Dec. 2:

Bennett, “Spatio-temporal coincidence and the grounding problem,” reader
Fine, “Coincidence and Form,” reader

More on ordinary objects

Mon., Dec. 7:

Thomasson, *Ordinary Objects*, Chs. 1-4
Reviews of Thomasson by Baker et al., reader

Course requirements:*Classes*

Class attendance and participation is pretty much mandatory. But that won't be a problem, since class will be so fun and engaging you'll wish there was even more. Trust me.

Readings

The class will be run as a seminar, with members of class responsible for preparing and leading discussion (in conjunction with me) on the material. I'll describe the structure on the first day of class. On the first day, we will assign responsibilities for the next few weeks.

Reaction papers

On one of the readings for each class, a two-page reaction paper. Can be double spaced. Make it longer if you want, but in no case longer than three double spaced pages. The ideal way to write a reaction is to give a one page summary of the point of the author, on which you intend to comment, and one page comment (usually a criticism) on that point.

Bring your reaction papers to class.

If it is your day to present, turn in the notes from which you'll be presenting, in lieu of a reaction paper.

Papers

One 8-10 page paper midway through the semester, and one 13-16 page paper at the end of the semester. For the short paper, you will choose from a list of topics/questions. For the long paper, I will give suggestions as to topics, but you are free to choose your own topic, as long as you discuss it with me first.

Grades:

Short paper: 20%

Long paper: 40%

Reaction papers: 20%

Presentations, preparation, and participation (the 3 P's): 20%

Late and missing papers:

- You must write both papers to pass the class
- Don't turn in your papers late. Don't do it.
- If you do, the grade will be marked down by a third for each day it is late, including weekend days. E.g., A to A- to B+ to B, and so on.
- You will be allowed one skipped reaction papers, without penalty. But absolutely not beyond that. If you absolutely have to miss class, you can email me your reaction papers.

Other policies and details:

- The schedule may change, so check Blackboard for announcements.
- You are expected to abide by the Honor Code.