

Phil 184: Topics in Metaphysics

Identity: Through Time and Across Worlds

UCLA, Fall 2018

MW 12-1:50

Dodd 167

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Course Summary

There are a lot of controversial claims I could make about my iPhone 5S (e.g. that it is better than the iPhone 6), but I doubt that the following platitude will cause any controversy at all:

- (1) Whatever is true of my iPhone 5S is true of anything that is identical to my iPhone 5S.

Despite being (seemingly) beyond reproach, (1) has puzzling consequences. Start by imagining that I drop my iPhone and crack the screen. Assuming no funny business (e.g. imperceptibly fast sleight of hand), the iPhone that is now broken is the very same iPhone that I held a moment ago. But, given (1), I have two *different* iPhones! After all, there is something true of the phone now on the ground (i.e. that its screen is cracked) that is not true of the phone I held a moment ago. How can we accept claims like (1) given that objects change their properties?

Now suppose that, over the years, I replace every part of my broken iPhone (e.g. the screen, the battery, the camera, etc.) until I end up with a working iPhone. You collect these broken pieces and use them to construct a broken iPhone. Which iPhone- the working one or the broken one- is identical to the iPhone with which I started (i.e. to *my* iPhone)? I hope it's the working iPhone! However, the iPhone I started with was broken and so, by (1), the presently broken iPhone is mine. How can we accept claims like (1) given that objects change their parts?

Next, when I hold my iPhone, how many objects are in my hand? According to (1), there are two: my iPhone and the hunk of materials that compose my iPhone. After all, it's true that my iPhone can be destroyed with a hammer, but not true that the hunk of materials composing my iPhone can be destroyed with a hammer. By (1), then, my iPhone is not identical to the hunk of materials that compose it and so I am holding *two* objects. But it's not possible for there to be *two* objects that are in the exact same place at the exact same time, so how can (1) be true?

Finally, my iPhone is white but there is a possible scenario in which it is painted black. So, my iPhone *could* have been black. But, by (1), any phone that is painted black (e.g. the phone in the possible scenario) is *not* my (white) iPhone. Therefore, there are *no* possible scenarios in which my phone is black and so it *had* to be white. How can (1) be true given that my phone could have been black?

In this course, we will discuss and evaluate the most prominent answers to these four questions that contemporary metaphysics has to offer. Of course, the above examples needn't have involved my iPhone in particular, but rather could have involved *any* material (composite) object. So in discussing these questions, we will address two aspects of the metaphysics of material objects in general: identity across time and identity across worlds.

Readings

Assigned readings are available on our course website.

Evaluation

Breakdown:

Exams (3): 15%, 35%, 35%

Quizzes: 15%

Exams: You will be assigned 3 take-home essay exams throughout the course of the quarter. The first exam will be worth 15%, the second 35%, and the third 35%. You will have one week to complete each exam. Unexcused late exams will be docked 10% for each class period that they are late. Exam extensions will be given in **unusual** circumstances, but **only if** they are requested as soon as is practically possible. Do NOT wait until after the exam is due to request an extension in light of some extenuating circumstances that occurred before the exam was due.

Quizzes: In order to encourage attendance and reading, I'll give a very short quiz at the start of class **once** every week. The quiz will be designed so as to check for basic comprehension of the day's assigned reading. Your grades on those quizzes will determine **15%** of your final grade.

Quiz Makeup: Quizzes missed for **any reason** are unexcused. However, you have the opportunity to make-up 3 quiz scores over the course of the quarter by writing a 2-page (double spaced, times new roman) reaction paper to the reading assigned for the quiz day missed. You are under no obligation to makeup missed quizzes. All makeup quizzes are due on the last day of class.

Completion: To pass this class, you must have completed all three exams. Your grade is a function of your scores on assignments only if you have completed all the exams.

Conduct Code: In accord with the UCLA Student Conduct Code (available in full at http://www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu/Code_choice.php), take care to submit only work that is your own.

Reading Schedule

While I will do my best to keep us on the following reading schedule, it is **subject to change** (with the following exceptions: exam dates will never be *earlier* than the schedule indicates).

April 2nd

Introduction

Unit 1.1: Identity Through Time: Qualitative Change

April 4th

Reading 1: Qualitative Change and the Doctrine of Temporal Parts

Lowe, E. J. (2002). *A Survey of Metaphysics*. Oxford University Press.

April 9th

Reading 2: Persistence, change, and explanation

Haslinger, Sally (1989). "Persistence, Change, and Explanation" *Philosophical Studies* 56 (1):1 – 28.

April 11th

Reading 3: Endurance and Indiscernibility

Merricks, Trenton (1994). "Endurance and indiscernibility" *Journal of Philosophy* 91 (4):165-184.

April 16th

No new reading. Catchup and Review. **Take home exam assigned.**

Unit 1.2: Identity Through Time: Change of Composition

April 18th

Reading 4: Identity Through Time

Chisholm, Roderick (1989). *On Metaphysics*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press

April 23rd

Exam Due

Reading 5: On the Identity of Artifacts

Lowe, E.J. (1983). "On the identity of artifacts" *Journal of Philosophy* 80 (4):220-232.

Unit 1.3: Identity Through Time: Coexistence

April 25th

Reading 6: Substantial Change and Spatiotemporal Coincidence (pp. 59-74)

Lowe, E. J. (2002). *A Survey of Metaphysics*. Oxford University Press.

April 30th

Reading 7: Artifacts

Van Inwagen, Peter (1990). *Material Beings*. Cornell University Press.

May 2nd

Reading 8: Temporal Parts

Sider, Theodore (2007). Temporal Parts. In Theodore Sider, John Hawthorne & Dean W. Zimmerman (eds.), *Contemporary Debates in Metaphysics*. Blackwell Pub.. 241--262.

May 7th

No new reading. Catch up and review. **Take home exam assigned.**

Unit 2: Identity Across Worlds

May 9th

Reading 9: Reductive Theories of Modality, Sections 1, 3, 3.1, 3.2, 3.5, 3.6, 4, 4.1

Sider, Theodore (2003). Reductive theories of modality. In Michael J. Loux &

Dean W. Zimmerman (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Metaphysics*.
Oxford University Press. 180-208.

May 14th

EXAM DUE

Reading 10: Identity Through Possible Worlds

Chisholm, Roderick (1989). *On Metaphysics*, Minneapolis: University of
Minnesota Press

May 16th

Reading 11: Counterparts or Double Lives?

David Lewis (1997). Counterparts or Double Lives? (Selections). In Michael C.
Rea (ed.), *Material Constitution*. Rowman & Littlefield. 126

May 21st

Reading 12: Essentialism

Lowe, E. J. (2002). *A Survey of Metaphysics*. Oxford University Press.

May 23rd: Memorial Day

May 30th

Reading 13: Personal identity.

Conee, Earl & Sider, Theodore (2005). *_Riddles of Existence: A Guided Tour of
Metaphysics_*. Oxford University Press.

June 6th

Reading 14: Paradoxes of Time Travel

Lewis, David (1976). The Paradoxes of Time Travel. *_American Philosophical
Quarterly_* 13 (2):145-152.

June 8th:

No new reading. Wrap up and review. **Final exam assigned.**