PY5325: Texts in Contemporary Metaphysics, Spring 2012

1. Practical Information for the Module

**Contact:** Professor Katherine Hawley (kjh5, phone (46)2469, room 206 Edgecliffe). My schedule varies weekly, so I do not have regular office hours. But you are very welcome to make an appointment to see me, and you should do so as soon as possible if you are struggling with the module for any reason.

**Class time:** 11-1, Fridays, room 104 Edgecliffe.

**Assessment:** there are two pieces of submitted work required for this module. The first is a 1000 word 'abstract' which clearly presents a problem, question or issue and outlines an argument you would like to make in response to this. **This abstract is worth 20% of the grade for the module, and is due on Monday 26th March.**

The second assessment is an essay of around 5000 words on a topic related to those covered in the module. **This essay is worth 80% of the grade for the module, and is due on Friday 11th May** (please note that I will be uncontactable between 2nd and 8th May). Your essay may be an expansion of the previously-submitted abstract, in which case you will be not be penalised for overlap with the abstract nor for changes you have made since writing the abstract. Alternatively, you may write your essay on a different topic if you prefer.

You are encouraged to discuss your written work, including possible topics, with me at any stage, and the sooner the better.

All coursework for semester Two is to be submitted via the Module Management System. For full guidance on how to submit your work via MMS, read the Student Guide to MMS.

<http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/philosophy/docs/mms_student_guide.pdf>

Coursework should be word-processed, double-spaced with one-and-a-half inch (4cm) margins. Coursework is marked anonymously, and so submitted work should be identified only by your matriculation number. Do not put your name anywhere on your coursework. On the first page of your coursework, you should include: your matriculation number, the module name and number, your tutor's name, the word count, the title of the essay/exercise, and the following statement: 'I hereby declare that the attached piece of written work is my own work and that I have not reproduced, without acknowledgement, the work of another'.

Please note that coursework must be in pdf format. This is to ensure that diagrams and symbols come out correctly.

NOTE the word count for all coursework or for the dissertation should include all footnotes, endnotes, and quotes AND the bibliography.
2. Overview and Preparation

We will focus on three related topics about the metaphysics of material objects: parthood, persistence and location. So we will be discussing, for example, whether objects have to interact causally in order to be parts of the same whole, whether ordinary objects have temporal as well as spatial parts, and whether they move through time as three-dimensional entities, or stretch out through four dimensions. We will also touch on ‘metaontological’ scepticism about these questions: are the answers dictated by the ultimate nature of reality, or mere reflections of our conceptual schemes?

There are three different types of preparatory reading you may find useful. You can start by reading a sequence of survey/overview articles on these topics. Try one of the following sets of articles:

- Sider, Hawthorne and Zimmerman, eds (2008): *Contemporary Debates in Metaphysics*, Oxford: Blackwell (available in paperback). In particular, the pairs of chapters on persistence (Sider, Hawthorne), mereology (van Cleve, Markosian), and metaontology (Hirsch, Eklund). The chapters on time and on personal identity are also relevant, though less centrally so.

- *Philosophy Compass* http://www.blackwell-compass.com/subject/philosophy/ (university network only) has helpful articles on ‘The Problem of Change’ (Wasserman), ‘Temporal Parts’ (McGrath), ‘Parts and Wholes’ (McDaniel), ‘Simples and Gunk’ (Hudson) and ‘Metaontology’ (Eklund). If you have some knowledge of physics, then also try ‘Persistence and Location in Relativistic Spacetime’ (Gilmore).

- *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* http://plato.stanford.edu/ (open access) is less focused, but you could read ‘Temporal Parts’ (Hawley), ‘Mereology’ (Varzi) if you have technical tastes, ‘The Problem of the Many’ (Weatherson), ‘Material Constitution’ (Wasserman), ‘Ordinary Objects’ (Korman) and/or ‘Change’ (Mortensen).

Depending on your background, you may find it useful to consult a general introduction to metaphysics whilst reading some of the above. Good ones include, in order of increasing length/detail:


For **follow-up reading** you can begin to investigate more deeply. You can of course take up the references in the introductory reading. Or you can tackle a contemporary classic monograph in this area of metaphysics. Try:


**Other resources:**

- **Google Scholar** (http://scholar.google.com/) can be overwhelming, but it does link through to JSTOR etc if you’re on the university network. It is a good way of finding an article or author you’re already interested in. The ‘Cited by’ link helps locate published discussions of something you’re interested in.

- The *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* is a huge resource, usually of very high quality: http://plato.stanford.edu/

  Try looking in the alphabetical table of contents for something resembling what you’re interested in, and if that article’s not quite right, follow the links for related entries at the end of the article.

- And **Oxford Scholarship Online** gives access to many OUP books: http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/osot/public/philosophy/subject_home.html

- **PhilPapers** (www.philpapers.org) is an organised directory of philosophical papers and books. You can browse categories such as ‘persistence’, ‘mereology’ and ‘material objects’, and investigate their sub-categories. A good strategy is to look up an article you already know to be relevant, check which category it falls under, then browse its neighbours.
3. Schedule and Reading

I have listed required reading for each week – everyone is expected to come to class prepared to discuss these items. Related reading will give you context or follow-ups, and will be useful for essay preparation. There is a lot of literature in this area, so I have just suggested some representative samples: if there is something particular you would like to follow up, please ask for more specific suggestions. Don’t forget the Philosophy Compass, Stanford Encyclopedia and other surveys I mention above. (NB I have listed my own publications where relevant, but please do not make these the focus of your essay.)

### Week 1 (10th February): Three Questions about Composition

**Required reading**

**Related reading**
- Varzi, Achille (2009): ‘Mereology’ in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, if you’d like to see a more technical approach.

### Week 2 (17th February): Extreme Views of Composition (Universalism and Nihilism)

**Required reading**

**Related reading**

### Week 3 (24th February): Moderate Views of Composition (and Brutalism)

**Required reading**


**Related reading**

- Koslicki, Kathrin (2008): *The Structure of Objects*, Oxford: OUP. Of particular interest if you know something about ancient philosophy. (In which case you may also like Verity Harte’s *Plato on Parts and Wholes*.)

### Week 4 (2nd March): The Problem of the Many

**Required reading**


**Related reading**


**Week 5 (9th March): Simples**

**Required reading**


**Related reading**


**Week 6 (16th March): Persistence: three- and four-dimensionalism**

**Required reading**


**Related reading**


### Week 7 (23rd March): Problems of Coincidence

**Required reading**


**Related reading**


24th March – 8th April: Spring Break

### Week 8 (13th April): Vagueness

**Required reading**

- Sider, Theodore (2001): *Four-Dimensionalism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press (available as e-book), chapter 4 section 9. (Earlier sections of this chapter are relevant for the previous week’s topic.)

**Related reading**


**Week 9 (20th April): Locations**

**Required reading**


**Related reading**

• Balashov, Yuri (2010): *Persistence and Spacetime*, Oxford: Oxford University

**Week 10 (27th April): Scepticism about the Composition Debate**

**Required reading:**


**Related reading:**


• The *Metametaphysics* collection which contains the Bennett paper has lots of interesting stuff. You could start with David Manley’s ‘Introduction’, and try Amie Thomasson (her book *Ordinary Objects* is also good), John Hawthorne or Kit Fine. Also check out Elizabeth Barnes’s review in *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews* (online).


**Week 11 (4th May):** No class today, since I will be away at a conference. Instead, I will offer a session on composition as identity (the idea that the whole just is its parts), at a later date to be agreed, either the following Friday (11th), or, if students prefer, following your final essay deadlines.

For this topic, central reading:


Overview reading:

• Wallace, Megan (forthcoming): ‘Composition as Identity 1’ and ‘Composition as Identity 2’, *Philosophy Compass*. (see her website). Lots more references in her bibliographies.

Related reading:

• Cameron, Ross (): ‘Composition as Identity Doesn’t Settle the Special Composition Question’, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*

