Syllabus

Phill 239 Metaphysics
Eli Hirsch Spring 2017

Required text: Kim, Korman, Sosa, eds., Metaphysics; An Anthology, 2d edition

In this course we will meander around a number of more-or-less incomprehensible issues of metaphysics. Beginning with the mind-body problem, we'll do Kripke's argument against mental-physical identity. Then Kim's puzzle about mind-body causality. This may raise questions about causality, prompting us to read Lewis's paper on causality. His analysis (as well as Kripke's piece) leans heavily on possible worlds, so we can next read accounts of possible worlds in Lewis, Stalnaker, and Adams. Moving further into the fog we will look at papers by Sider and Stalnaker on the connection between vagueness and ontology. On the general nature of ontology we can look at papers by Quine, Carnap, Shaffer, Sosa, and Hirsch. These readings may need to be somewhat expanded or contracted as we go along.

Course requirements:

- Obviously attend all classes.
- Select one of the readings (from readings 4-13) and lead class discussion of it for about an hour. (If you don't want to lead a class discussion, you can instead submit a short paper of about four pages on one of the readings.)
- Term paper of about ten pages due about a week after last class.

Readings

1. Kripke, 122-140, especially pp. 134-37
2. Kim, 588-97
3. Lewis, 397-405
4. Lewis, 208-230
5. Stalnaker, 230-36
6. Adams, 187-208 (you can skip sections 3.3 and 3.4)
7. Sider, 661-673
8. Stalnaker, 159-67
9. Quine, 7-16
10. Carnap, 16-27
11. Shaffer, 73-97
12. Sosa, 652-61
13. Hirsch, 686-703

Office hours, Rabb 331: Friday 2:00-4:00, or by appointment
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Learning Goals: To understand the nature of the Being of the nature of Being.
For more information, see the Philosophy Department’s learning goals at:
http://www.brandeis.edu/departments/philosophy/undergrad/learninggoals.html

Academic Dishonesty: Academic Dishonesty will be reported to the Department of
Student Development and Conduct. See
http://www.brandeis.edu/studentaffairs/srcs/index.html

Disability: If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis and
need to have special accommodations for this class, please see me.

Four Credit Course (with three hours of class time per week)
Success in this 4 credit hour course is based on the expectation that students will spend a
minimum of 9 hours of study time per week in preparation for class (readings, papers,
discussion sections, preparation for exams, etc.).