
FALL 2015 –METAPHYSICS SEMINAR (PH 4002)

MEETING INFORMATION

Room: DSPT Room 3

Thursdays: Tuesdays at 12.40 am

Instructor: Marga Vega, mvega@dspt.edu

Office Hours: By appointment

DESCRIPTION

This seminar focuses on some special topics in metaphysics. It will examine the ontologies of three different realities: the physical world, the social world and the person. In the first case we will review questions that concern Thomistic philosophy, and that some Analytic philosophers have also engaged in the past recent years, especially in relation to causation. The second section is concerned will study the ontology of society and will analyze logical features that create social reality, and some applications. The third section will focus on the essence-existence distinction as it applies to metaphysics and anthropology.

COURSE ORGANIZATION- METHODOLOGY

This is a seminar format course. The course has three main thematic groups with three reading components. For the first part we will read E. Feser's *Scholastic Metaphysics*, for the second part, we will read J. Searle's *The Construction of Social Reality*. The third section of the seminar will be comprised of readings from W. Norris Clarke, J. Maritain, and L. Polo. The topics will be presented by the students taking turns, and discussed by all participants.

STUDENT LEARNING GOALS

What will the student learn in this course? The student will

1. Acquire knowledge on three of three different realms of ontology: the ontology of the physical world, the ontology of social reality, the ontology of personhood. To achieve this goal the student will read and present on the readings assigned on these topics.
2. Learn about contemporary analytic metaphysics in relation to the Thomistic tradition. For this goal the student will read and present on Edward Feser's *Scholastic Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction*.
3. Develop critical thought on metaphysical questions. To achieve this goal the student will participate in class with questions, objections and argumentation and through weekly journal entries

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4. Improve argumentative skills in Philosophy with careful reading, clear writing, systematic thinking, and the construction and evaluation of arguments. To achieve this goal the student will be encouraged to ask questions in class, relate topics of Metaphysics with her/his own interests, background and other philosophical disciplines. Student presentations will help consolidate philosophical skills and learn philosophical methods.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. To goal 1. The student will show proficiency of the questions related to categorical and dispositional properties, counterfactual analysis of causation, real and logical distinctions, efficient causation, emergentism, individuation, atomism and reductionism, status functions, deontic powers, esse-essentia distinction and personal transcendentals.
2. To goal 2. The student will prepare an annotated bibliography on the topic of their choice.
3. To goal 3. The student will be able to assess the differences in metaphysical approaches as well as convergences between Thomistic and Analytic approaches.
4. To goal 4. The student will be able to present the key points of the subject in a way that shows knowledge of the basic questions and personal engagement.
5. To goal 5. The student will be proficient in the way of articulating a philosophical problem, critically assessing the arguments and providing her personal input.

ASSIGNMENTS

To achieve our goals the students will engage metaphysics consistently by attending class and contributing to class discussion, and by reflecting on assigned readings through online journals and presentations to the class.

- **Presentations:** Each week students will take turns presenting the assigned reading. This presentation should focus on synthesizing the reading assigned for the day. The thesis, key distinctions, and basic examples or arguments of the assigned reading should be stated. The student will submit a summary of the assigned reading of no more than two pages. The summary should state the problem the reading addresses. The grade will be based on the clarity, organization, focus and brevity of the presentation, and on the organization and focus and coherence of the summary or outline.
- **Online Journals:** The student is expected to submit one journal entry per week, through Moodle. The entries should be between 200 and 500 words. This entry should reflect some critical engagement with the reading assigned for the week. You should raise questions, concerns, criticisms, or simply point to passages, distinctions or arguments that you do not understand. These entries will form the basis for our discussion sections. Students must submit their entries before our class. The student will be graded on the quality and quantity of entries. Late entries will not receive full credit.
- **Annotated bibliography:** Each student will submit a bibliography of ten sources, accompanied by your own précis of each entry (100-250 words). The bibliography will cover the ten most important essays related to your topic of interest, ideally related to your

thesis topic in connection with our metaphysics class. If the student does not have a thesis topic by the time the bibliography is due, she may use the exercise to explore possible thesis topics. The student will need to use the philosopher's index to complete this exercise. She will be graded on the quality of the annotations, and the significance of the selections.

- The grade for the course will be: 25% for presentations, 25% for outlines/summaries, 25% for online journals, 25% for annotated bibliography.

READINGS

- **W. Norris Clarke. *Person and Being*.** Marquette Univ Pr.. 1993. **ISBN-10:** 0874621607, **ISBN-13:** 978-0874621600. Amazon: 13.83.
- **Edward Feser. *Scholastic Metaphysics: A Contemporary Approach*.** Scholasticae. **ISBN-10:** 3868385444, **ISBN-13:** 978-3868385441. Amazon: \$ 19.30
- **J. Maritain. *The Person and the Common Good*.** University of Notre Dame Press. 1973. **ISBN-10:** 0268002045, **ISBN-13:** 978-0268002046. Amazon: 15.04
- **L. Polo. *Why a Transcendental Anthropology*.** Leonardo Polo Institute for Philosophy. **ASIN:** B00JDPT1V2, Amazon: \$ 1.99.
- **J. Searle. *The Construction of Social Reality*.** Free Press, 1997. **ISBN-10:** 0684831791, **ISBN-13:** 978-0684831794. Amazon: \$ 15.17

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

PART I: ONTOLOGY

LECTURE	TOPIC	READINGS
Week 1 Sept. 10 th	POWERS	Feser, Act and Potentiality
Week 2 Sept. 17 th	CAUSATION	Feser, Causation
Week 3 Sept. 24 th	SUBSTANCE	Feser, Substance
Week 4 Oct. 1st	ESSENCE AND EXISTENCE	Feser, Esse and Existence

PART II: THE ONTOLOGY OF SOCIETY

Week 5 Oct. 8 th	SOCIAL ONTOLOGY	Searle
Week 6 Oct. 15 th	SOCIAL ONTOLOGY	Searle
Week 7 Oct. 22 nd	SOCIAL ONTOLOGY	Searle Vega

PART III: THE ONTOLOGY OF THE PERSON

Week 8 Nov. 5 th	Reading Week	
Week 9 Nov. 12 th	Personal Ontology	Clarke: <i>Person And Being</i>
Week 10 Nov. 19 th	Personal Ontology	Maritain: <i>The Person And The Common Good</i>
Week 12 Dec. 3 rd	Personal Ontology	Polo: <i>Why A Transcendental Anthropology</i>
Week 13 Dec. 10 th	Review	