SPRING 2020 – METAPHYSICS (PH 2050)

MEETING INFORMATION

Room: DSPT 3
Time: Thursdays at 9.40 am
Instructor: Marga Vega, mvega@dspt.edu
Office Hours: By appointment

DESCRIPTION

Metaphysics is the area of philosophy that attempts to get behind all appearances and to arrive at reasoned judgments about how things really are. Although this course presents a comprehensive introduction to Aristotelian and Thomistic metaphysics, we will situate questions in the greater philosophical tradition from Parmenides to Heidegger. Some of the topics that we will study are the nature of metaphysics as a science and its subject matter, the analogy of being, actuality and potentiality, causality, substance, individuation, the esse-essentia distinction, and the transcendentals.

COURSE ORGANIZATION - METHODOLOGY

This is a hybrid course that combines online and in-class teaching. A weekly lecture delivered electronically before the Thursday meeting. A second in-class session will take place on Thursdays.

ONLINE LECTURE

During the online session, the student will follow the audio slide show presentation and read the referenced texts.

IN CLASS SESSION

• We will discuss the topics of the online lecture and readings.
• The instructor will add more comments or materials related to the online lecture.
• We will review Clark’s questions at the end of the assigned chapter.
• We will devote sometime to questions on the online lecture.
• Each student will bring up a topic for discussion from the readings. Some readings will be presented by some the students (Feser’s book).
STUDENT LEARNING GOALS

1. Acquire systematic knowledge of the main topics of Metaphysics (Institutional Goal A1: Integrative Thinking and A2: Intellectual Humility). To achieve this goal the student will follow the online lectures and complete the reading of the handbook *The One and the Many*, by C.W. Norris. The student will take an exam to ensure that a basic knowledge of the metaphysical notions has been acquired.

2. Become familiar with Aristotle's and Aquinas’ texts on the nature of Metaphysics (Institutional Goal A2: Intellectual Humility). To achieve this goal the student will read up on the assigned readings for Aquinas and Aristotle.

3. Learn about different traditions and schools of thought and how they solved the problems presented by Metaphysics (Institutional Goal A1: Integrative Thinking, and A2: Intellectual Humility). To achieve this goal the student will read the book *Being and Some Philosophers* by E. Gilson. The student will have the opportunity to deepen on other historical and contemporary readings in Metaphysics.

4. Develop critical thought in metaphysical questions (Institutional Goal A3: Self-direction and B: Effective Leadership). To achieve this goal the student will write a critical review paper.

5. Improve writing and argumentative skills in Philosophy (Institutional Goal A1: Integrative Thinking and B: Effective Leadership). 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. Participation during discussion sessions is encouraged. Student presentations and papers will help consolidate philosophical skills and learn philosophical methods.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. To goal 1. The student will exhibit command of metaphysical notions like act and potency, substance and accidents, causation, essence and existence, transcendentals, as well as of the principles and methods of Metaphysics.

2. To goal 2. The student will become familiar with Aristotle’s and Aquinas’ writings on metaphysics.

3. To goal 3. The student will be able to assess the differences in metaphysical approach of the Ancient and Medieval Metaphysics, Modern and Contemporary Metaphysics.

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 criticism.

5. To goal 5. The student will be proficient in articulating a philosophical problem, critically assessing the arguments and providing her personal input.

ASSIGNMENTS

In this course the student is expected to:

- READ THE REQUIRED READINGS EVERY WEEK and take notes for discussion.
- TAKE THE ONLINE LECTURE. Take notes for discussion. Read the referenced texts.
- ATTEND IN CLASS SESSION and present notes for discussion as well as questions from Clark’s book.
- READ *Being and Some Philosophers*. There will be a question about this book in the midterm exam and presentations at the end of the semester. 10% of the grade.
- MIDTERM EXAM. April 23rd. 40% of the grade. There will be study questions to prepare for this exam.
- WRITE A PAPER. Due May 21st. 50% of the grade. The paper is a critical review of a published paper provided by the instructor. The paper will assess a certain position on a topic and critically support, object or implement the views defended on it. The instructor will provide a list of papers to choose from. The goals of this review paper are:
  - To become familiar with secondary literature and scholarship in Metaphysics, as well as the latest research topics in the area.
  - To learn the craft and skill of writing scholarly papers by reviewing one of them.
  - To develop writing and argumentative skills.
  - To encourage the student's own thinking and critical appraisal.

**READINGS & BIBLIOGRAPHY**

**REQUIRED BOOKS**


**FURTHER REQUIRED READINGS**

- Aquinas, T. *Commentary to Aristotle’s Metaphysics*. Excerpts
- Aquinas, T., *On Being and Essence*
- Aquinas, T. *On the Principles of Nature*
- Aristotle. Metaphysics Gamma (Book IV), chp. 2-6, *Metaphysics Zeta* (Book VII)
- More brief texts from Aristotle and Aquinas will be provided.
RECOMMENDED READINGS (Not Required)

- Descartes, R. *Meditations on First Philosophy, Fifth Meditation*
- Heidegger, M. *What is Metaphysics?*
- Habermas, J. *Postmetaphysical Thinking*, MIT, 1994, Chp. 1, sections 1, 2 and section 3, pp. 3-55.
- Ockham, W., *Ordinatio, I, dist. 2, q. 6.*
- Parmenides. *On Nature*
- Plato. *Phaedo*
- Plato. *Parmenides*
- Scotus, D. *Ordinatio, II, dist. 3, pars 1*
- Spinoza, B. *Metaphysical Thoughts. Essence, Existence*

WORKS OF REFERENCE

Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<td>Introduction</td>
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<td>February 13&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>What is Metaphysics • Clark, Ch. 2. • Anderson, c. 1 • Aquinas, <em>Com. Meta.</em>, Bk. I, 1, 2, 3; and Bk. II, 1, 2; Bk. III, 4; Bk. IV, 1, 2, 3; Bk. VI, 2; Bk. XI, 2, 3.</td>
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<td>The Method of Metaphysics • Clark, Ch. 3 • Anderson c. 2 &amp; 4 • Aquinas, <em>Com. Meta.</em>, Bk. III, 1. 2, 3, 5, 6, 7; Bk. VI, 1; Bk. XI, 7.</td>
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<td>February 20&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Metaphysics and Science • Clark Ch. 1 • Aquinas, <em>Com. Meta.</em>, Bk. VI, 1. 1; Bk. XI, 1. 7.</td>
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<td>Transcendentals • Clark Ch. 4, 16, 17, 18 • Anderson Ch. 5-9</td>
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<td>The First Principles • Aristotle’s <em>Metaphysics</em>, Bk. 4 • Aquinas, <em>Com. Meta.</em>, Bk. III, 15; Bk. IV, 1. 4, 5, 6; Bk. V, 1. 1; Bk. XI, 1. 1, 4, 5.</td>
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<td>February 27&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Act and Potentiality • Clark Ch. 7 • Feser Ch. 1 • Aristotle, <em>Metaphysics</em>, Bk. IX. • Aquinas, <em>Com. Meta.</em>, Bk. V, 14; Bk IX, 1-10.</td>
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<td>March 5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Causality I • Clark, Ch. 6 and 9 • Feser, Ch. 2 • Aquinas, <em>Com. Meta.</em>, Bk. I, 11, 14, 15, Bk. V, 4, 5, Bk. VIII, 1, 3, 4.</td>
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<td>Causality II • Clark, Ch. 12 and 13 • Feser, Ch. 2 • Aquinas, <em>Com. Meta.</em>, Bk. V, 2, 3.</td>
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<td>Individuation • Clark Ch. 10 • Wippel, 351-375</td>
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