

Phil 184: Topics in Metaphysics

Identity: Through Time and Across Worlds

UCLA, Fall 2014

MW 10-11:50

Dodd 161

Instructor Information

Katie Elliott

334 Dodd

kelliott@humnet.ucla.edu

310.267.4847

Office hours: R 3-4

Gabe Dupre

343 Dodd

gdupre@humnet.ucla.edu

310-825-5388

Office hours: TBA

Michael Hansen

371 Dodd

mjhansen@ucla.edu

310-825-6383

Office hours: TBA

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:
<https://ccle.ucla.edu/course/view/14F-PHILOS184-1>

Evaluation

Breakdown:

Midterm: 40%

Final: 40%

Quizzes: 10%

Attendance and Participation: 10%

Midterm and Final: Your midterm and final will both consist of closed-note essay exams that you will complete during class. Prior to each exam, you'll be given a list of possible essay questions as a study guide. Each exam will be worth **40%** of your grade.

Attendance and Reading Comprehension- Lectures: 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 **10%** of your final grade. **No makeup quizzes will be given** (even if you miss the quiz because you are merely late rather than absent). Apart from these quizzes, there is no attendance requirement.

Attendance and Participation- Sections: Attendance in sections **is mandatory**. Your TA will take attendance. Furthermore, class discussion is an *essential* feature of any good philosophy class. Recitation is your opportunity to ask questions, make points, clarify issues, and complain about me. Recitation discussion will make your time in class much more fruitful and enjoyable. Accordingly, **10% of your final grade** will be a function of your attendance and participation.

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).

Monday, October 6th:
Introduction

Unit 1.1: Identity Through Time: Qualitative Change

Wednesday, October 8th:

Reading 1: Qualitative Change and the Doctrine of Temporal Parts

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

Monday, October 13th:

Reading 2: Persistence, change, and explanation

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

Wednesday, October 15th:

Reading 3: Endurance and Indiscernibility

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

Monday, October 20th:

No new reading. Discussion of Merricks's "Endurance and Indiscernibility" continues.

Unit 1.2: Identity Through Time: Change of Composition

Wednesday, October 22nd:

Reading 4: Identity Through Time

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

Monday, October 27th:

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

Wednesday, October 29th:

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

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

Monday, November 3rd:

Reading 7: Artifacts

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

Wednesday, November 5th:

Study Questions Posted

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.

Monday, November 10th:

No new reading. Discussion of Temporal Parts continued.

Wednesday, November 12th: **Midterm**

Unit 2: Identity Across Worlds

Monday, November 17th:

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.

Wednesday, November 19th:

Reading 10: Identity Through Possible Worlds

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

Monday, November 24th:

Reading 11: Counterparts or Double Lives?

David Lewis (1997). Counterparts or Double Lives? (Selections). In Michael C.

Rea (ed.), Material Constitution. Rowman & Littlefield. 126

Unit Thanksgiving: Time Travel?

Wednesday, November 26th:

Reading 12: The Paradoxes of Time Travel

Lewis, David (1976). "The Paradoxes of Time Travel" American Philosophical Quarterly 13 (2):145-152.

Unit 2 Continued

Monday, December 1st:

No new reading. Discussion of "Counterparts or Double Lives" continues.

Wednesday, December 3rd:

Reading 13: Essentialism

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

Monday, December 8th:

Study Questions Posted

Reading 14: Primitive Thisness and Primitive Identity

Adams, Robert (1979). "Primitive thisness and primitive identity". Journal of Philosophy 76 (1):5-26.

Wednesday, December 10th: Wrap up and review

Final Exam: Thursday, December 18, 2014, 3:00pm-6:00pm