The word ‘metaphysics’ derives from the Greek for ‘after’ and ‘physics’. However, this is not because metaphysics is the study of the supernatural, occult, or anything like that—contrary to what you might think from the way chain bookstores categorize their books! Here is the real reason for the label. Aristotle wrote some books that came to be collectively known as the *Physics*. Then he wrote some other books. They came to be collectively known as the books after the *Physics*…. or, that’s right, the *Metaphysics*. So the word ‘metaphysics’ now basically means ‘the study of issues in the ballpark of the issues that Aristotle talked about in the books he wrote after the *Physics*.’

More concretely, metaphysics is the study of the ultimate nature of reality. For example, are there any abstract objects? What are numbers? What is causation? What is time? What is a law of nature—does $F=ma$ constrain or merely describe what objects do? What is going on when we say that two things are both red, that they share their color—is there really some one thing, redness, that they both have? What is the difference between change and destruction? A bookcase continues to exist if you paint it blue, but does the *Mona Lisa*? And so forth.

In this course, we will largely focus on questions about time, change, freedom, and possibility. We will start out by considering what kind of thing a person is, and what sorts of changes we can and cannot survive. (We definitely survive minor physical changes like haircuts. But what about larger physical changes, or large psychological changes?) We will then address the question of change in general. Do objects change by in some sense *moving* through time, or by having different parts at different times, in the way they have different parts at different places? This will lead us to consider the nature of time itself. Does it make sense to say that it passes? Is the past and perhaps even the future just as real as the present? Is time travel possible? If it is, why can’t I go back and kill my younger self? Finally, we will turn to some related questions about human freedom and choice.

**Teaching Assistant:**
Ian McKay  
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Office Hours TBA

**Required Texts:**
- Coursepack available through the Cornell Store.

**Further Resources:**
- On reserve at Uris:
  - *Four Dimensionalism*, Theodore Sider
  - *Riddles of Existence*, Theodore Sider and Earl Conee
  - *Metaphysics*, Peter van Inwagen
  - *Free Will*, ed. Gary Watson
On the web:
The Cornell Library maintains a list of CP philosophy resources here:
http://www.library.cornell.edu/olinuris/ref/phil.html
In particular, I recommend the following:
The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy:  http://www.oxfordreference.com

Evaluation:
• Papers: 70%
  You will write three 5-7 page papers. The first will be written in two drafts, and worth
  20%. The other two will be worth 25% each. More details on what I expect later on.
• Final Exam: 20%
• Homework and Participation: 10%
  A brief homework assignment will be assigned most Wednesdays, and will be due on the
  next Friday at 10 AM (two days later). You’ll turn these in via Blackboard. They won’t
  be graded, just checked off—your homework grade will be based on the percentage of
  assignments you have completed. Your participation grade will be determined by the
  extent to which you are actively engaged in the course: attendance, contributions to class
  discussions, and individual meetings all count.

Further Policy Notes:
1. Homework cannot be made up.
2. I do grant extensions on papers, but you have to talk to me in advance. If you do not make
   arrangements beforehand, late papers will be downgraded by 1/3 letter grade per day.
3. To pass this class, you must write all three papers and take the final exam.
4. Each student in this course is expected to abide by the Cornell University Code of
   Academic Integrity. Any work submitted for academic credit must be the student's own
   work, and all references must be properly cited.

Tentative Schedule of Readings:
All page numbers refer to the anthology; readings marked ‘CP’ are in the coursepack available at the Cornell
Store.

0. Introduction
  8/31 no reading assigned

I. Persons
  9/2 Perry, excerpt from “The Problem of Personal Identity,” CP
  9/7 continued
  9/9 Swinburne, “Personal Identity: The Dualist Theory,” 368-383
  9/14 continued

II. Objects
  9/16 Chisholm, “Identity Through Time”
  9/21 Quine, from “Identity, Ostension, and Hypostasis,” 263-265
  267-269
  9/23 Paper #1 draft due
  Thomson, “Parthood and Identity Across Time,” particularly §5, CP
  Heller, “Temporal Parts of Four Dimensional Objects,” CP
  Optional: van Inwagen, “The Doctrine of Arbitrary Undetached Parts,” CP
  9/28 continued
III. Time
9/30 Paper #1 drafts returned
McTaggart, “Time,” from The Nature of Existence, 116-123
10/5 Broad, “McTaggart’s Arguments Against the Reality of Time,” 124-129
10/7 Paper #1 final version due
Williams, “The Myth of Passage,” 149-161

Fall Break

10/14 Prior, “Some Free Thinking About Time,” 104-107
10/19 Markosian, “How Fast Does Time Pass?” CP
10/21 continued

IV. Issues Arising: Is Time Travel Possible?
10/26 Heinlein, “All You Zombies,” CP
10/28 Paper #2 due
Lewis, “The Paradoxes of Time Travel,” 224-235
11/2 no class
11/4 continued; Ehring, “Personal Identity and Time Travel,” CP

V. Issues Arising: Freedom of the Will
11/9 Taylor, “Fatalism,” CP
Optional: Markosian, “The Open Past,” CP
11/11 Smith and Oaklander, “Fatalism and Tenseless Time,” CP
Dennett, “Introduction,” from Elbow Room: The Varieties of Free Will Worth Wanting, CP
Optional: Dennett, from “A Tool for Understanding Determinism,” from Freedom Evolves, CP
O’Connor, “The Agent as Cause,” 465-471
Optional: Chisholm, “Human Freedom and the Self,” 441-450
11/18 van Inwagen, “The Consequence Argument,” 450-456
11/23 Dennett, “Possible Worlds,” from Freedom Evolves, CP
Lewis, “Are We Free to Break the Laws?” CP
11/25 no class (Thanksgiving)

VI. Possible Worlds
11/30 Lewis, “Modal Realism at Work: an Excerpt from On the Plurality of Worlds”, 499-502 (section 1.1; rest is optional)
Lewis, “Possible Worlds,” CP
12/2 Paper #3 due
Stalnaker, “Possible Worlds,” CP
Optional further reading: Lewis, “Counterparts of Persons and Their Bodies,” 511-518

Final exam: Wednesday December 9, 7:00 PM- 9:30 PM.