Metaphysics
Philosophy 3640
Spring 2011

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Office Hours: Thursdays 12:30-1:30 and by appointment
Note: My office is not wheelchair accessible. Please call or e-mail me if you need to set up a meeting in an alternate location.

Texts
What is a Law of Nature?, David Armstrong
Universals: an Opinionated Introduction, David Armstrong
~Properties, eds. D. H. Mellor and Alex Oliver (Oxford Readings in Philosophy)
~Causation, eds. Ernest Sosa and Michael Tooley (Oxford Readings in Philosophy)
~Laws and Lawmakers, Marc Lange
Additional readings will be made available via Blackboard.

Further Resources
• On reserve at Uris:
  A Companion to Metaphysics, eds. Jaegwon Kim and Ernest Sosa
  Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction, Michael Loux
  Causation and Counterfactuals, eds. L.A. Paul, Ned Hall, and John Collins

• On the web:
The Cornell Library maintains a list of online 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

Assessment
• Papers: 70%
  Two papers, worth 35% each. For undergrads, these should be roughly 10 pages long; for grad students, they should be 12-15 pages long. (Normal font size and margins all ‘round, please.)
• Homework and Participation: 30%
  A brief homework assignment will be due every Tuesday at noon.
  Undergrad version: These should be roughly a paragraph, and won’t be graded. Your homework grade will be based on the percentage of assignments you have completed.
  Grad student version: These should be roughly a page, and won’t be carefully graded, but I reserve the right to give the occasional ‘+’ or ‘−’.

Use of Blackboard Software
I will use Blackboard to send occasional e-mails, and to post paper topics and homework questions. You will submit your answers to homework questions via Blackboard (though you will turn papers in the old-fashioned way, on paper.) You must self-enroll to access the Blackboard site.

• To self enroll:
Go to http://blackboard.cornell.edu and log in. (Or, if you do not yet have a Blackboard account, click “New User: Get an Account”.)
Click “All Blackboard Sites” tab near the upper left
Search for Phil 3640
Click button marked “Enroll”

• To access and answer homework questions
Log on to Blackboard and access the Phil 3640 site.
Click on “Assignments” on the left hand side of the page
Read that week’s homework question.
Click on the “View/Complete Assignment” link.
Undergrads should try to answer the question in the “Comments” box rather than uploading a file. You may upload a file if the comment box isn’t big enough, but bear in mind that your homework responses should not exceed a page. Grad students should upload a file.

• Questions about Blackboard? Go here first!
  http://atc.cit.cornell.edu/blackboard/students/index.cfm

Tentative Schedule of Readings
Most readings are in the salient book for that section of the course. Those marked with an asterisk will be made available on Blackboard.

Introduction
1/25  *Hume, excerpt from Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding, Book VII, 2;
      *Hume, excerpt from An Abstract of a Treatise of Human Nature;
      *Lewis, excerpt from introduction to Philosophical Papers Volume II

1. Laws of Nature
1/27  Armstrong, What is a Law of Nature?, chapter 1 and 2
2/1   Armstrong, What is a Law of Nature?, chapter 2 and 3
2/3   Armstrong, What is a Law of Nature?, chapter 3 and 4
2/8   Armstrong, What is a Law of Nature?, chapter 5, §4
      Lewis, Counterfactuals, pp. 73-74
2/10  reread Lewis, p. xii of introduction to Philosophical Papers Volume II
      Lewis, p. 213-216 only of “New Work for a Theory of Universals” (i.e., the
      beginning of the section titled “Laws and Causation”)
      *Loewer, “Humean Supervenience”
2/15  Armstrong, What is a Law of Nature?, chapter 6 (skip §5 & 8)
2/17  continued and catch-up

2. Properties
2/22  *Plato, excerpt from The Republic book X
      Armstrong, Universals: An Opinionated Introduction, pp. 1-11
      reread Armstrong, What is a Law of Nature?, chapter 6, §2
2/24  Quine, “On What There Is”
3/1   Armstrong, Universals: An Opinionated Introduction, chapters 1 and 2
3/3   no class
3/8   Paper #1 due
      Armstrong, Universals: An Opinionated Introduction, chapter 3
3/10  Lewis, “Modal Realism at Work: Properties”
      Lewis, “New Work for a Theory of Universals” sections 1-3
3/15  Shoemaker, “Causality and Properties”
Armstrong, *What is a Law of Nature?*, chapter 11 §1

3/17 continued

Spring break

3. **Causation**
   - 3/29 Mackie, “Causes and Conditions”
   - 3/31 **no class**
   - 4/5 Lewis, “Causation”
     *Collins, Hall, and Paul, sections 0 and 1 of the Introduction to *Causation and Counterfactuals*
     *Lewis, “Counterfactual Dependence and Time’s Arrow”*
   - 4/7 continued
   - 4/12 *Lewis, “Postscripts”, section E*
   - 4/14 *Lewis, “Postscripts”, section D*
     Lewis, “Void and Object” sections 1, 2, and 5 (rest optional), Dowe, “A Counterfactual Theory of Prevention and ‘Causation’ by Omission”
     *Optional: Beebee, “Causing and Nothingness”*
   - 4/19 *McGrath, “Causation by Omission: a Dilemma”*
     *Optional: Thomson, “Causation: Omissions”*
   - 4/21 *Mackie, “Causing, Delaying, and Hastening: Do Rains Cause Fires?”*
   - 4/26 *Armstrong, “Going Through the Open Door Again”*
     Tooley, “Causation: Reductionism vs. Realism” particularly §3-6 (section 2 rehearses arguments against Humeanism about laws of nature)
     *Schaffer, “Causation and Laws of Nature: Reductionism”*

4. **Back to Laws, briefly**
   - 4/28 Lange, *Laws and Lawmakers* chapter 1
   - 5/3 Lange, *Laws and Lawmakers*, chapter 2
   - 5/5 continued

**May 9: Paper #2 due**