Course Description and Objective

This course will focus on whether and how metaphysics as a science is possible and why this issue is relevant to metaphysics. We will come to learn that this question is, in the history of philosophy, intimately tied with thinking being. The problem is that there is no category with which one can think being. Being, then, confronts us with the limit of thinking. But if metaphysics is the science of being or attempts to think being, such a science seems impossible to get off the ground. We will begin our investigation of this problem from two contemporary readings, but the main focus of the class will be on four historical thinkers that take up this issue in their writings: Heidegger, Kant, Descartes, and Aristotle. These authors will be approached from inverse historical order, both because it is often claimed that there has been no progress made in the science of metaphysics (thus, there seems no need to read texts in their historical order) and it will hopefully shed new light reading these thinkers in this order. We will also interlace contemporary readings in metaphysics to see that these historical figures could possibly add to the contemporary debate as well as show both the continuity and break from tradition that contemporary metaphysics presents us. The goal for the whole class is to arrive at a deeper appreciation of metaphysics and what object(s) it studies.

Required Readings

Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, Yale
Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, Cambridge
Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Cambridge
Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Green Lion
Patricia Curd, ed., *A Presocratic Reader*, Hackett

Assignments and Grading

Two Class Presentations 20%
Take Home Midterm (Oct 30th) 20%
Term Paper 10-15 pages (Dec 4th) 30%
Final 3hrs (Dec 18th 6:30pm) 30%

Calendar

Aug 29th **Introduction and Problem**
Aug 31st **Carnap** (handout)
Sept 5th **Quine**, “On What There Is”, in *Metaphysics: Contemporary Readings*
Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, pp. 1-10
Sept 7th *Introduction to Metaphysics*, pp. 10-31
Sept 12th *Introduction to Metaphysics*, pp. 31-54
Sept 14th Introduction to Metaphysics, pp.55-78
Sept 19th Introduction to Metaphysics, pp. 79-97
  Michael Dummett, “Realism”, in Metaphysics: Contemporary Readings
Sept 21st Introduction to Metaphysics, pp. 98-143
  Heraclitus, Fragments, pp. 30-41
Sept 26th Introduction to Metaphysics, pp. 143-221
  Parmenides, Fragments, pp. 44-51
Sept 28th Kant, Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics, pp. 5-14, pp. 139-153
  Hume, Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding, Ch. 4
Oct 3rd Prolegomena, pp. 15-31
  Quine, “Two dogmas of empiricism”, in From a Logical Point of View
Oct 5th Prolegomena, pp. 32-45, pp. 156-60
  J.M.E. McTaggart, “Time”, J.C.C. Smart, “The Space-Time World”, in
  Metaphysics: Contemporary Readings
Oct. 10th Reading Day
Oct 17th Prolegomena, pp. 58-78, Critique of Pure Reason Book II, Ch. II, Section I & II
  Saul Kripke, “Identity and Necessity”, in Metaphysics: Contemporary Readings
Oct 24th Prolegomena, pp. 79-115, Midterm assigned
Oct 26th Descartes, Meditations on First Philosophy, pp. 3-15, pp.63-67
Oct 30th Midterm Due 12pm
Oct 31st Meditations, pp. 16-23, pp. 68-77
  Hegel, “With What Must the Science Begin?”, from Science of Logic
Nov 2nd Meditations, pp. 24-36, pp. 78-89
Nov 7th Meditations, pp. 37-49, pp. 90-106
  David Lewis, “Possible Worlds”, in Metaphysics: Contemporary Readings
Nov 9th Meditations, pp. 50-62, pp. 107-115
  Hilary Putnam, “A Problem about Reference”, in Metaphysics: Contemporary Readings
Nov 14th Aristotle, Metaphysics, Book B, pp. 35-52
Nov 16th Metaphysics, Book Γ, pp. 53-59
Nov 20th-24th Thanksgiving Break
Nov 28th Metaphysics, Book Γ, pp. 59-76
  Graham Priest, “What’s So Bad About Contradictions?”
Nov 30th Metaphysics, Book Λ, pp. 231-238
  D.C. Williams, “The Elements of Being”, in Metaphysics: Contemporary Readings
Dec 4th Paper Due 5pm
Dec 5th Metaphysics, Book Λ, pp. 238-243
Dec 7th Metaphysics, Book Λ, pp. 243-252
Dec 12th Quine, “Ontological Relativity”, in Metaphysics: Contemporary Readings
Conclusion
Recommended Literature

**Heidegger**
Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*
Heidegger, “What Is Metaphysics?”, in *Pathmarks*
Polt & Fried, *A Companion to Heidegger’s Introduction to Metaphysics*
Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*

**Kant**
Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*
Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*
*Cambridge Companion to Kant*
Hegel, *Science of Logic*
R.G. Collingwood, *An Essay on Metaphysics*
Deleuze, *Kant’s Critical Philosophy*
B. Longuenesse, *Kant and the Capacity to Judge*
Klaus Reich, *The Completeness of Kant’s Table of Judgments*
M. Friedman, “Kant and the Twentieth Century” in Parrini, *Kant and Contemporary Epistemology*

**Descartes**
*Cambridge Companion to Descartes*
D. Weissman, *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy (Rethinking the Western Tradition)*
A. O. Rorty, *Essays on Descartes’ Meditations*
M. Gueroult, *Descartes’ Philosophy*
J.-L. Marion, *On Descartes’ Metaphysical Prism*
L. Kolakowski, *Metaphysical Horror*
H. Putnam, “Brains in a vat”, in *Reason, Truth, and History*
Borges, “The Circular Ruins”

**Aristotle**
Joseph Owens, *The Doctrine of Being in the Aristotelian Metaphysics*
Giovanni Reale, *The Concept of First Philosophy and the Unity of the Metaphysics of Aristotle*
C. Kirwan, *Aristotle’s Metaphysics ΓΔE*
M. Frede and D. Charles, *Aristotle’s Metaphysics Lambda*
J. Barnes, *Articles on Aristotle Vol. 3*
V. Politis, *Aristotle and the Metaphysics*
St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle’s Metaphysics*
E. Halper, “‘Being qua Being’ in Metaphysics Γ”, in *Elenchos: Rivista di Studi sul pensiero antico* (1987)
Contemporary

Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*

Putnam, “The Meaning of ‘Meaning’” in *Mind, Language and Reality*

“Why there isn’t a Ready-Made World”, in *Realism and Reason*

Quine, “Two Dogmas of Empiricism” and

“Reference and Modality”, in *From a Logical Point of View*

This list is not exhaustive but only suggestive. Feel free to read other literature on these texts. Further, I do not recommend reading all the literature, but I do advise you to check at least one or two for each author.