# PH5536: RECENT TOPICS IN METAPHYSICS

spring 2012 | mwf X:XX or tr X:XX | building XXX

*Course Coordinator*: Aaron J. Cotnoir < `a.cotnoir@abdn.ac.uk`>

This course will focus on issues in contemporary metaphysics related to the existence and structure of objects. How many things are there? When – if ever – does a thing have parts? Are things individuated — and if so, how? The course has three main aims: (i) to be an introduction to *metaphysics* as it is done in contemporary 'analytic' philosophy; to give you a working knowledge of many rival theories regarding the nature and number of objects; and to introduce you to some useful formal tools (e.g. plural logic, mereology, topology).

## 1 COURSE REQUIREMENTS

### 1.1 READING

All reading assignments will be posted either in .pdf or via url on MyAberdeen. Reading assignments must be completed before each seminar. It is recommended that you take detailed notes over the readings.

### 1.2 MARKS

Your mark is based on a *Paper*, and *Participation*:

| | |
|---|---|
| *Paper* | 90% |
| *Participation* | 10% |

- The *paper* is a 3500 word seminar paper on some area covered in the course material. You are required to approve your paper topic with me by mid-semester. If you wish to submit a first draft for comments, you may do so before the start of week 10.
- *Participation* consists in two in-class presentations covering the relevant readings. Presentations will be scheduled in the first few weeks of term.

## 2 COURSE SCHEDULE

| WEEK | DATE | SUBJECT | READINGS |
|---|---|---|---|
| w1 | | Introduction | |
| w2 | | Ontology: Pluralism & Coincidence | Unger 'Problem of the Many'<br>Sidelle 'A Sweater Unraveled' |
| w3 | | Ontology: Anti-realism | Chalmers 'Ontological Anti-realism' |
| w4 | | Ontology: Monism | Schaffer 'Monism'<br>Schaffer 'From Nihilism to Monism' |
| w5 | | Composition: Special Question | Van Inwagen §§2-3,6-9??<br>Varzi 'Mereology' |
| w6 | | Composition: Nihilism | Dorr §2 'Simplicity of Everything |
| w7 | | Composition: Universalism/Identity | Lewis 'Parts of Classes' §§??-??<br>Baxter 'Many-One Identity' |
| w8 | | Composition: Restricted | Markosian 'Restricted Composition' |
| w9 | | Composition: Simples & Gunk | Markosian 'Simples'<br>Zimmerman 'Could Extended Objects ...?' |
| w10 | | Composition: Worlds & Junk | Bohn 'Must There Be A Top Level?'<br>Bohn 'An Argument Against ...' |
| w11 | | Boundaries | Varzi 'Boundary' (SEP)<br>Sider 'Simply Possible' |
| w12 | | Indeterminacy | Evans 'Can There Be Vague Objects?'<br>Lewis 'Evans Misunderstood'<br>Hawley 'Vagueness and Existence' |

## 3 POLICIES

- If any student in this class needs disability accommodations, please feel free to come and discuss this with me. University resources can be found at: `www.abdn.ac.uk/disability/students/index.shtml`.
- Any suspicion of academic misconduct may result in disciplinary action. If you are unfamiliar with the University policies, visit: `www.abdn.ac.uk/registry/quality/appendix5x15.pdf`.