

Philosophy 250z: Metaphysical Grounding
Harvard University, Spring 2013

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Office hours: Thursdays, 2-4pm, or by appointment

Course Description:

Recent work on the metaphysical in-virtue-of relation, with applications to debates in the philosophy of religion, metaphysics, epistemology, metaethics, and normative ethics.

Time and Place: Wednesdays, 2-4pm, in Emerson 310

Course URL: <http://isites.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=k93534>

All handouts, announcements, and readings will be available through the course website. Note that you must login using your Harvard PIN to see all of the site's content. (Auditors without a Harvard PIN should contact the instructor about receiving an XID so that they can access everything on the site.)

Course Admission Policy:

This is a graduate-level course; undergraduates (and students in a graduate program other than philosophy) will be allowed to take the course for credit only under special circumstances.

Readings:

Each week's readings will be available for photocopying in Robbins Library in Emerson Hall and for downloading on the course website.

Requirements:

The breakdown of grades will be as follows:

30% *Seminar attendance and participation.*

Evaluation will be based on attendance, preparation, and contributions to discussion. For those of you who don't feel comfortable talking during class, discussing material during office hours may count toward your contributions to discussion.

70% *Final paper.*

A final paper of approximately 20 to 25 double-spaced pages will be officially due by 11:59pm on Thu., May 9. (University regulations require that all assignments for courses without a final exam be due by the last day of reading period.) Student are highly encouraged to meet with the instructor during the course of the semester to discuss their final paper topic.

Note on Collaboration:

You are encouraged to consult with one another on the choice of paper topics, and you may also share library resources. You may find it useful to discuss your chosen topic with your peers, particularly if you are working on the same topic as someone else, but you should ensure that the written paper you submit for evaluation is the result of your own research and reflects your own approach to the topic.

Meeting and Reading Schedule [tentative; may change]:

NOTE: Readings listed in brackets are optional.

Wed., Jan. 30: Introduction

[R. M. Hare, *The Language of Morals*, pp. 80-81, 130-131, 145]

[Brian McLaughlin & Karen Bennett, "Supervenience" (focus on §§2.2, 3.5)]

I. The Metaphysics and Logic of Grounding

Wed., Feb. 6: Rosen on Grounding

Gideon Rosen, "Metaphysical Dependence: Grounding and Reduction"

[Fabrice Correia & Benjamin Schnieder, "Grounding: An Opinionated Introduction"]

Wed., Feb. 13: Schaffer on Grounding

Jonathan Schaffer, "On What Grounds What"

Wed., Feb. 20: Fine on Grounding (pt. 1)

Kit Fine, "The Question of Realism"

Thomas Hofweber, "Ambitious, Yet Modest, Metaphysics" (focus on §2)

Kit Fine, "Guide to Ground," §§1-5

Wed., Feb. 27: NO CLASS

Wed., Mar. 6: Fine on Grounding (pt. 2)

Kit Fine, "Guide to Ground," §§6-11

Kit Fine, "The Pure Logic of Ground"

Kit Fine, "Some Puzzles of Ground"

Wed., Mar. 13: Is Grounding Transitive and Irreflexive?

Jonathan Schaffer, "Grounding, Transitivity, and Contrastivity"

Carrie Jenkins, "Is Metaphysical Dependence Irreflexive?"

Wed., Mar. 20: NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK **[note correction of date]**

Wed., Mar. 27: Are There Ungrounded Truths?

Michael Della Rocca, "PSR"

Ross Cameron, "Turtles All the Way Down: Regress, Priority, and Fundamentality"

[Elizabeth Anscombe, "Making True"]

[Karen Bennett, "By Our Bootstraps"]

II. Applications

Wed., Apr. 3: Applications in Normative Ethics: Particularism about Reasons for Action

Jonathan Dancy, *Moral Reasons*, pp. 55-79 (i.e. §3.5, ch. 4, and §§5.1-2)

Jonathan Dancy, *Ethics without Principles*, pp. 15-17, 38-52, and 73-92 (i.e. §2.1, ch. 3, and ch. 5)

Wed., Apr. 10: Applications in Epistemology: The Analysis of Knowledge

[William Lycan, "The Gettier Problem Problem"]

Elijah Chudnoff, "What Should a Theory of Knowledge Do?"

Elijah Chudnoff, "Grounding and Entailment"

Timothy Williamson, *Knowledge and Its Limits*, ch. 1 (focus on §1.3)

Wed., Apr. 17: Applications in the Philosophy of Religion: The Coherence of Omniscience
Dennis Whitcomb, “Grounding and Omniscience”

Wed., Apr. 24: Applications in the Philosophy of Religion: The *Euthyphro* Dilemma
Plato, *Euthyphro* (focus on 9d-11b)
Matt Evans, “Lessons from *Euthyphro* 10a-11b”
Richard Joyce, “Theistic Ethics and the Euthyphro Dilemma”
Steve Lovell, “C. S. Lewis and the Euthyphro Dilemma”

Wed., May 1: Applications in Metaethics: Is Normativity Mind-Dependent? (pt. 1)
Sharon Street, “A Darwinian Dilemma for Realist Theories of Value,” §§1-2
Sharon Street, “Constructivism about Reasons”
Sharon Street, “What Is Constructivism in Ethics and Metaethics?”

Wed., May 8: Applications in Metaethics: Is Normativity Mind-Dependent? (pt. 2) [MAKE-UP CLASS]
Sharon Street, “A Darwinian Dilemma for Realist Theories of Value,” §§3-10 (skip or skim §9)
Sharon Street, “Objectivity and Truth: You’d Better Rethink It”
Selim Berker, “Does Evolutionary Psychology Show That Reasons for Action Are Mind-Dependent?”

Final paper officially due by 11:59pm on Thu., May 9.