

METAPHYSICS: FINAL PAPER

Ted Sider, Metaphysics
4-7 pages, double-spaced
Due in class, April 29

Write a short essay on a topic of your choosing. Some topics are suggested below. These are only suggestions; feel free to choose a topic not on the list (but if you do so, clear it with me first.) Be sure to cite any works you use in some standard bibliographic style.

All the articles mentioned below are on reserve online for our class. Here are some additional anthologies and books you may find useful:

- *Personal identity*, edited by John Perry
- *Moral Responsibility*, edited by John Martin Fischer
- *The Identities of Persons*, edited by Amelie Rorty
- *Material Constitution*, edited by Michael Rea
- *Four-Dimensionalism*, by me.
- *Free Will*, edited by Gary Watson
- *Philosophy of Time*, edited by Robin LePoidevin and Murray MacBeath

The “Philosopher’s Index” online database (to which Rutgers library subscribes) is a valuable resource for locating publication information on philosophy articles, books, authors and topics. Many articles are available online through JSTOR, to which Rutgers library also subscribes.

Suggested paper topics:

1. Gary Watson defends a certain conception of freedom (a conception which is often defended by compatibilists) in his paper “Free Agency” against a certain objection. Formulate the conception of freedom in question. Explain the objection to this conception of freedom. Then explain Watson’s response to this objection. Finally, evaluate Watson’s response.
2. In our discussion of the free will and determinism problem, we assumed the principle that a person is morally responsible for an action only if that person could have done otherwise. But in “Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility”, Harry Frankfurt argues that this principle is false. Formulate the principle, explain clearly Frankfurt’s argument against it, and evaluate this argument.
3. In “Toward a credible agent-causal account of free will”, Randolph Clarke tries to improve Chisholm’s theory of free will. State the main shortcoming of Chisholm’s view that Clarke is trying to fix, state Clarke’s proposed improvement, and then evaluate it: does Clarke succeed in fixing the problem?

4. Psychological continuity theorists and bodily continuity theorists differ about what happens in a case of “mind-swapping”. Psychological continuity theorists say that you go where your psychology goes, whereas bodily continuity theorists say that you stay where your body stays. Bernard Williams in his paper “The Self and the Future” gives arguments on each side of this dispute, and leaves the issue somewhat unresolved. Explain each of the two arguments that Williams discusses, and try to evaluate which argument is stronger. What does Williams think about this issue?
5. In his paper “Personal Identity”, Derek Parfit argues for, among other things, the conclusion that personal identity doesn’t have the significance most philosophers think it has. Present and discuss one of his arguments for this conclusion.
6. In his paper “Survival and Identity”, David Lewis gives his solution to the duplication problem. Explain and critically discuss it.
7. In his paper “Spatial and Temporal Analogies and the Concept of Identity”, Richard Taylor maintains that time and space are analogous in many more ways than most people think. Present and critically discuss some of these analogies.
8. In “The Myth of Passage”, Donald Williams attacks the A-theory of time. Explain and critically discuss some of his arguments.