

METAPHYSICAL STRUCTURE

Ted Sider, Spring 2009
ted.sider@nyu.edu
<http://tedsider.org/>

Description

This will be an advanced graduate seminar in metaphysics. We will work through my book draft *Writing the Book of the World*, as well as supplementary readings. My book defends realism about “structure” (joints in nature/fundamentality), and applies this to various issues in metaphysics and meta-metaphysics. I’m especially interested in questions of the form: are ontological (modal, logical) questions “substantive”?

Requirements

There are two options. Option 1: write a seminar paper (approximately 20 pages). In this case, a “progress report” is due on April 6, and the final version is due on May 11. The progress report can be a rough draft of the whole paper, or a rough draft of part of the paper, or an outline of the paper, or a reasonably detailed description of the paper’s goals and bibliography. Its purpose is to show that you’ve got a feasible project that is well underway. If the progress report looks unpromising then you may need to start over, so I suggest discussing your topic with me before beginning work. Option 2: write two shorter papers (approximately 10 pages each), the first due on March 30, the second due May 11. Here too, I recommend discussing the topics with me in advance.

Tentative Schedule

The following includes much more than we’ll have time for. Under each heading, the readings that appear first are the ones that are most likely to be directly discussed in class.

Introduction WBW chapter 1; Lewis, “New Work for a Theory of Universals”, *On the Plurality of Worlds* pp. 59-69, “Extrinsic Properties”

- Reference magnetism** WBW chapter 2: intro and section 2.1; Lewis, “Putnam’s Paradox”; Williams “Eligibility and Inscrutability”; Hawthorne, “Craziness and Metasemantics”; Field, “Mathematical undecidables, metaphysical realism, and equivalent descriptions”
- Structure in physical spaces** WBW section 2.3; Sklar, *Space, Time, and Spacetime*, chapter II, sections F–H.
- Depth** WBW chapter 3; Fine, “The Question of Realism”; Rosen, “Objectivity and Modern Idealism”; Wright, *Truth and Objectivity*
- Metametaphysics** WBW chapter 4
- Beyond the predicate** WBW chapter 5; Quine “Truth by Convention”, “Carnap and logical truth”; Prior, “The runabout inference-ticket”; Belnap, “Tonk, Plonk and Plink”
- Questions about fundamentality** WBW chapter 6
- Metaontology** WBW chapter 7; Sider, “Ontological realism”; Hirsch, “Quantifier variance and realism”; Boolos, “To be is to...”; Rayo and Yablo, “Nominalism through de-nominalisation”; various papers in Chalmers, Manley, and Wasserman’s *Metametaphysics*, especially Fine, “The question of ontology”. Perhaps also the papers by Thomasson, Hofweber, and Yablo
- Structure in logic and metalogic** WBW chapter 8, Beall and Restall, *Logical Pluralism*
- The A-theory of time** WBW chapter 9, McTaggart “Time”; Williamson, “Necessary existents”; Smart, *Philosophy and Scientific Realism* chapter 7
- Anti-modalism** WBW chapter 10, Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds*, section 3.2, Sidelle’s *Necessity, Essence, and Individuation* plus Yablo’s review, Lewy, “Logical necessity”
- Rival accounts of structure** WBW chapter 11, Fine “The question of realism”; Schaffer “On what grounds what”; Dorr “What we disagree about when we disagree about ontology”