

Nottingham Trent University

Module Specification

	Basic module information	
1	Module Title:	Contemporary Metaphysics
2	Module Code:	PHIL30415
3	Credit Points:	20
4	Duration:	Year Long
5	School:	Arts and Humanities
6	Campus:	Clifton
7	Date this version first approved to run:	Jan 2015

8 Pre, post and co-requisites:

These are modules that you must have studied previously in order to take this module, or modules that you must study simultaneously or in a subsequent academic session

<u>Pre, Co, Post</u>	<u>Module Code</u>	<u>Module Title</u>
Pre	Phil 201	Introduction to Contemporary Philosophy

9 Courses containing the module

<u>Level</u>	<u>Core/Option</u>	<u>Mode</u>	<u>Code</u>	<u>Course Title</u>
		FT	HUMA008	BA (H) Communication & Society and Philosophy
		FT	HUMA016	BA (H) English and Philosophy
		FT	HUMA023	BA (H) European Studies and Philosophy
		FT	HUMA028	BA (H) Film & TV and Philosophy
		FT	HUMA033	BA (H) Global Studies and Philosophy
		FT	HUMA038	BA (H) History and Philosophy
		FT	HUMA042	BA (H) Linguistics and Philosophy
		FT	HUMA045	BA (H) Philosophy and International Relations
		SW	MODL014	BA (H) French and Philosophy
		SW	MODL027	BA (H) German and Philosophy
		SW	MODL039	BA (H) Italian and Philosophy
		SW	MODL058	BA (H) Spanish and Philosophy
		FT	EURX001	European Exchange (First Half Year)
		FT	EURX002	European Exchange (Second Half Year)

FT	EURX003	European Exchange (Full Year)
FT	INTX001	International Exchange (First Half Year)
FT	INTX002	International Exchange (Second Half Year)
FT	INTX003	International Exchange (Full Year)

10 Overview and aims

This module aims to introduce students to some of the major disputes in contemporary metaphysics. The following topics will be covered: 1. Disputes about the natures of properties and relations on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the natures of the objects that bear properties and stand in relations; 2. disputes about the natures of possibility and necessity (including disputes about what would and might have been, and about so-called 'possible worlds'); and 3. disputes about time (including disputes about the significance of the present time, and about what it is involved in something's continuing to persist over time).

11 Module content

This module introduces the core themes and issues that interest contemporary metaphysicians. The topics covered will include:

This module introduces the core themes and issues that interest contemporary metaphysicians. The module will begin with a discussion of the oldest problem in metaphysics, viz. the problem of how two things can be the same in some respects. Plato's answer to this problem, that properties are Platonic universals, will be considered, alongside some of the historical objections. This debate will be traced through to the contemporary debate about properties, and David Armstrong's view that immanent universals exist will be contrasted with David Lewis's development of nominalism. Further modern views on the nature of properties will then be discussed, with particular attention paid to the bundle theory of properties. More general metaphysical considerations will then be discussed, focussing on the notion of existential commitment and Quine's influential view that 'to be is to be the value of bound variable'. Consideration of Quine's view will lead into a discussion of modality, and the view that modal truths can be analysed in terms of possible worlds. This will, in turn, lead into a discussion of the concept of identity, and how that concept can be understood modally and temporally. In this context, various theories about time and identity over time will be discussed (e.g. the A-theory and B-theory of time, endurantism and perdurantism, and presentism and eternalism).

12 Indicative reading

Armstrong, David Malet (1978). *Nominalism and Realism. Universals and Scientific Realism Volume I*. Cambridge: CUP

Black, Max (1952). 'The identity of indiscernibles.' *Mind* 61 (242):153-164.

Campbell, Keith (1981). 'The Metaphysic of Abstract Particulars.' *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 6 (1):477-488.

Lewis, David (1983). 'New work for a theory of universals.' *Australasian Journal of*

Philosophy 61 (December):343-377.

Lewis, David K. (1986). *On the Plurality of Worlds*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Quine, Willard van Orman (1948). 'On What There Is.' *Review of Metaphysics* 2 (5):21--36.

Sider, Theodore (2001). *Four Dimensionalism: An Ontology of Persistence and Time*. Oxford: OUP

13 **Learning outcomes**

Learning outcomes describe what you should know and be able to do by the end of the module

Knowledge and understanding. After studying this module you should be able to:

- Understand the core debates that preoccupy contemporary metaphysicians
- Present arguments for and against differing views taken in modern metaphysics
- Show a detailed understanding of the key arguments relating to the issues of fundamental ontology, modality, and the metaphysics of time
- Understand the concepts of objects, properties, modality, and identity

Skills, qualities and attributes. After studying this module you should be able to:

- Give a detailed description of various positions taken by contemporary metaphysicians
- Confidently apply the concepts of objects, properties, modality, and identity in discursive writing
- Understand the positions of contemporary philosophers who have engaged with questions of existence, modality, and identity

Evaluate, in detail, the success of arguments in contemporary metaphysics

14 **Teaching and learning**

Range of modes of direct contact

This indicates the range of direct contact teaching and learning methods used on this module, e.g. lectures, seminars

Teaching and learning methods will normally consist of weekly two hour lectures accompanied by a one hour seminar.

Total contact hours:

48

Range of other learning methods

This indicates the range of other teaching and learning methods used on this module, e.g. directed reading, research
Alongside the standard package of lecture / seminar sessions, you will be invited to participate in a number of more independent learning exercises. For example, you may be asked to read chapters and sections from books and articles, and use this as the basis for preparing for seminars as well as the final essay. Reading is an essential learning activity for this module Total non-contact hours: 152

15

Assessment methods

This indicates the type and weighting of assessment elements in the module

<u>Element number</u>	<u>Weighting</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	100%	Essay	1 Summative End of Semester Essay

Diagnostic/formative assessment

This indicates if there are any assessments that do not contribute directly to the final module mark

You will be offered opportunities to submit and discuss an essay outline, which will help you develop a feasible approach to the necessary research for the essay as well to improve the structure and content of the writing. You will also have the opportunity to receive formative feedback on a weekly basis based on seminars.

Participation and engagement in seminar work and workshops on a group and an individual basis.

Further information on assessment

This section provides further information on the module’s assessment where appropriate

The assessment for this module consists of :

- 4,000 word essay (100%)

Document management
16 Module Title: Contemporary Metaphysics

17	Module Code:	PHIL30415	
18	Subject (JACS) Code	V500	
19	Cost Centre	141	
20	School:	AAH	
21	Academic Team	ECM	
22	Campus	2 (Clifton)	
23	Other institutions providing teaching	<i>Please complete in box 23 a-d - if applicable</i>	
		Institution	%
23a	Other UK Higher Education or Further Education Institution- Please name Percentage not taught by NTU		
23b	Other public organisation in the UK- Percentage not taught by NTU		
23c	Other private organisation in the UK - Percentage not taught by NTU		
23d	Any other Non-UK organisation - Percentage not taught by NTU		
24	Date this version was formally approved by SASQC/DAG:		