

Metaphysics

Final paper topics

Write a 6–8 page paper discussing any ONE of the questions listed below. The first draft of the paper is due in class on Wednesday, November 27th; the final draft is due in class on Monday, December 9th. Your discussion should conform to one of the following models:

- (i) Argue for some answer to the question. Consider at least one objection to your argument, and say why you think these objections are unsuccessful.
- (ii) Present an argument for some answer to the question. Give at least one objection to this argument. Consider some response that a proponent of the argument might make to at least one of these objections, and say why you think the response is unsuccessful.

Notes

(a) While originality is encouraged, the arguments and objections you consider may be based on those that were presented in class or in the readings. If you do make use of the readings, be sure to acknowledge your sources. Quotation is permitted, provided you give proper citations. Paraphrase is not: when you are describing the views of others, you should take care to put things in your own terms. Plagiarism, of course, is strictly forbidden.

(b) An objection to the *conclusion* of an argument does not count as an objection to the *argument*!

(c) Before you start working on the paper, please make sure you are familiar with Jim Pryor's page of guidelines on writing philosophy papers:

<http://www.princeton.edu/~jimpryor/general/writing.html>

Questions

- 1 Does God exist?
- 2 Are there material objects?
- 3 Are any material objects colored?
- 4 Does it ever happen that two material objects occupy the same space at the same time?
- 5 'Suppose one had certain (nonoverlapping) objects, the *x*s, at one's disposal; what would one have to do—what *could* one do—to get the *x*s to compose something?' (Van Inwagen, *Material Beings*, p. 31)
- 6 Do some things exist that do not exist now?
- 7 Are there numbers?
- 8 Are there properties?
- 9 Are there fictional characters (e.g. Sherlock Holmes), and if so, what are they like?
- 10 Choose any one of questions 1–9. Do philosophers who give different answers to this question really disagree with one another, or is the debate merely verbal?
- 11 Wildcard question: in consultation with the instructors, make up your own question, which may concern any of the topics we have discussed in the course, or related areas of metaphysics.

NB: if you want to take this option, you should contact Cian or Pete in person or by email by Friday, November 22nd.