

## PHIL 590S-03:: Social Metaphysics

FALL SEMESTER, 2021.

*Last updated: November 15, 2021.*

### INSTRUCTOR

- Name: Dr. Kevin Richardson
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### MEETINGS

- Times: Thursdays, 3:30-6:00 PM
- Location: West Duke 204
- Office Hours: By appointment

### CONTENT

- This course surveys what I call the *new social metaphysics*, which consists of (a) applying the tools of analytic metaphysics to issues in social philosophy and (b) applying the tools of social philosophy to issues in analytic metaphysics. We will discuss the metaphysics of social groups, gender and race kinds, social construction, and the linguistic and political implications of social kinds.

### EXPECTATIONS

- Term Paper (60%)
  - The term paper should be 5500-8000 words long. You must submit an abstract (500-1000 words including bibliography) for the term paper by 11 PM on November 7. The abstract must be approved by me before you can submit your final term paper. The term paper is due by 11 PM on December 9.
- Presentations (30%)
  - You will be expected to lead two 70-minute discussions on the course readings. Please prepare a short handout for each session.
- Participation (10%)
  - You will be expected to regularly attend and participate in class. It is good practice to come to class with at least two questions about each reading.

### SCHEDULE

- (1) Classic Social Ontology
  - a. Searle, John R. *The Construction of Social Reality*. Chapters 1 & 2.
  - b. *Optional*: Epstein, Brian. “Social Ontology.” <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/social-ontology/>
- (2) Social Groups I: Primitivism and Structures
  - (a) Uzquiano, Gabriel. “The Supreme Court and the Supreme Court Justices: A Metaphysical Puzzle.”
  - (b) Ritchie, Katherine. “Social Structures and the Ontology of Social Groups”
  - (c) *Optional*: Effingham, Nikk. “The Metaphysics of Groups.”
- (3) Social Groups II: Pluralities and Fusions

- (a) Horden, John, and Dan López de Sa. “Groups as Pluralities.”
  - (b) Hawley, Katherine. “Social Mereology.”
  - (c) *Optional*. Thomasson, Amie. “The Ontology of Social Groups.”
- (4) Amelioration I: Social Construction
- (a) Diaz-Leon, E. “What Is Social Construction?”
  - (b) Haslanger, Sally. “Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them to Be?”
  - (c) *Optional*: Mason, Rebecca, and Katherine Ritchie. “Social Ontology.”
- (5) Amelioration II: The Exclusion Problem
- (a) Jenkins, Katherine. “Amelioration and Inclusion: Gender Identity and the Concept of Woman.”
  - (b) Andler, Matthew. “Gender Identity and Exclusion: A Reply to Jenkins”
- (6) Amelioration III: Language and Reality
- (a) Dembroff, Robin. “Real Talk on the Metaphysics of Gender.”
  - (b) Barnes, Elizabeth. “Gender and Gender Terms.”
  - (c) *Optional*: Antony, Louise. “Feminism Without Metaphysics or a Deflationary Account of Gender.”
- (7) Amelioration IV: Ontological Justice
- (a) Jenkins, Katharine. “Ontic Injustice.”
  - (b) Ásta. “Categorical Injustice.”
- (8) Fundamentality I: Metaphysical Naturalness
- (a) Chapters 1-4 of: Sider, Theodore. *Writing the Book of the World*.
  - (b) *Optional*: Sider, Theodore. “Ontological Realism.”
- (9) Fundamentality II: Feminist Critiques of Naturalness
- (a) Barnes, Elizabeth. “Realism and Social Structure.”
  - (b) Sider, Theodore. “Substantivity in Feminist Metaphysics.”
  - (c) *Optional*: Mikkola, Mari. “On the Apparent Antagonism between Feminist and Mainstream Metaphysics.”
- (10) Fundamentality III: Essentialism
- (a) Witt, Charlotte. “What is Gender Essentialism?”
  - (b) Passinsky, Asya. “Finean Feminist Metaphysics”
  - (c) *Optional*: Witt, Charlotte. “Anti-Essentialism in Feminist Theory”
- (11) Fundamentality IV: Ontological Individualism
- (a) Chapters 1-4 of: Epstein, Brian. *The Ant Trap: Rebuilding the Foundations of the Social Sciences*.
  - (b) *Optional*: Haslanger, Sally. “Failures of Methodological Individualism: The Materiality of Social Systems.”
  - (c) *Optional*: Christian List and Kai Spiekermann, “Methodological Individualism and Holism in Political Science: A Reconciliation”
- (12) Fundamentality V: Grounding and Anchoring
- (a) Chapters 5-8 of: Epstein, Brian. *The Ant Trap: Rebuilding the Foundations of the Social Sciences*.
  - (b) *Optional*: Einheuser, Iris. “Counterconventional Conditionals.”

(13) Catch-Up Week