**Syllabus: Metaphysics (Spring 2020, Peking University)**

Instructor: Zeyu Chi ([zc255@cornell.edu](mailto:zc255@cornell.edu))

Office Hours: Wednesday 11:30am-12:30am or by appointment

**Course Description**

This course will be a survey of some classic topics in metaphysics: free will and determinism, essence, necessity and possible worlds, identity and persistence of ordinary objects, causation, properties and natural kinds.

As an intro-level philosophy course, there is no prerequisite course requirement, although some background in the basics of symbolic logic would be helpful. Note that this course is designed to be writing intensive: there will be weekly reading responses, as well as longer essay assignments, which require a good command of academic English. The student should expect to spend around 3-4 hours on the reading each week and an additional 1-2 hour on composing the weekly response. Since this isn’t a language course, we won’t devote any class time to working on one’s English, although those who need extra help with the language are welcome to seek advice with the instructor.

**Requirements**

Attendance & in-class participation: 15%

Weekly response: 30% (starting from week 2)

Paper 1: 20%

Paper 2: 35%

**Policies:**

1. Extensions can be granted on papers, but you need to talk to the instructor in advance. Late papers will be downgraded by 1/3 letter grade per day without prior arrangement with the instructor.
2. Always remember to cite and give credit to the authors whenever you borrow ideas from others, by direct quoting, paraphrasing or other means. Any act of plagiarism will lead to failing the course. For those who are enrolled in the class, please take the plagiarism quiz at <https://www.turnitin.com/static/plagiarism-quiz/> and email me the result by Feb 26th.

**Tentative Schedule of Readings & Deadlines (\*are optional readings; all readings can be found on the Canvas course website)**

Week 1: Pryor, Guidelines on Writing a Philosophy Paper

\*Inwagen, “What is Metaphysics?”

Week 2: Inwagen, “The Powers of Rational Beings: Freedom of the Will”

Week 3: Frankfurt, “Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility”

\*“Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person”

**Topic of paper #1 is assigned**

Week 4: Chisholm, “Human Freedom and the Self”

Week 5: Sider, “Reductive Theories of Modality”

**First draft of paper #1 is due**

Week 6: Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds* 1.1-1.2, 1.6-1.9

\*Stalnaker, “Possible Worlds”

Week 7: Fine, “Essence and Modality”

**Final draft of paper #1 is due**

Week 8: Chisholm, “Identity through Time”

Week 9: Thomson, “Parthood and Identity across Time”

Week 10: Parfit, “Personal Identity”

\*Lewis, Survival and Identity”

**Topic of paper #2 is assigned**

Week 11: Armstrong, “Universals as Attributes”

Week 12: Lewis, “New Work for a Theory of Universals”

**First draft of paper #2 is due**

Week 13: Shoemaker, “Causality and Properties”

Week 14: Lewis, “Causation”

\*Hume, excerpt from *Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*

**Second draft of paper #2 is due**

Week 15: Quine, “Natural Kinds”

**Final draft of paper #2 is due**