

PHIL 285
THE METAPHYSICS OF THE NON-FUNDAMENTAL
SYLLABUS AND INTRODUCTION¹

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Seminars: Tuesday 1-3.50pm

Office Hours: Monday 10am–12pm, 8088

1 Introduction.

The fundamental has moved centre-stage in metaphysics in recent years. But – pretheoretically at least – it seems that most of the world is *non-fundamental*. Shouldn't therefore metaphysics aim to be more democratic in outlook, and give the humble non-fundamental its full metaphysical due?

This is the question we will ultimately try to answer in this course. On the way, we will introduce ourselves to a variety of non-fundamental ontologies, including composite, emergent, effective, and socially constructed ontologies. We will consider some sceptical arguments for the existence and reality of non-fundamental stuff, and then consider whether – even granting that it is real – it should be on the docket of today's metaphysicians.

2 Structure.

There are three broad topics we'll be focussing on in this course, and these are as follows. (1) *The nature of the non-fundamental*. What sort of things are non-fundamental entities? (2) *The existence and reality of the non-fundamental*. Are non-fundamental entities of dubious status from the point of view of metaphysical realism? (3) *The role of the non-fundamental in science and metaphysics*. What conceptual dependences exist between the non-fundamental and the fundamental in science? What is the epistemic standing of the fundamental in science, and what are the implications of that for metaphysics?

Items with a '*' are still TBC. Don't hesitate to get in touch if you are struggling with any of the readings, or feel like you need something else or something more.

Syllabus overleaf.

¹filename: SyllabusNonFundamental.tex

INTRODUCTION

1. **Introduction and Overview.** Reading: Amie Thomasson, ‘Problems of Rivalry With Science’, chapter 8 *Ordinary Objects*; Steven French, ‘The Structure of the World’, excerpt.

Optional: excerpt of Eddington’s Gifford Lectures (http://www-history.mcs.st-andrews.ac.uk/Extras/Eddington_Gifford.html); excerpt of Wilfred Sellars, ‘Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man’, Sections III, IV and V (<http://selfpace.uconn.edu/class/percep/SellarsPhilSciImage.pdf>)

TRANCHE 1: VARIETIES OF NON-FUNDAMENTAL ONTOLOGY

2. **Composite ontology.** Peter van Inwagen, ‘When Are Objects Parts?’ and *Material Beings* (chapters 9 and 10); Ted Sider, ‘Against Parthood’. (NB: this looks like a lot, but it isn’t; please pay attention to the *methodologies* employed in each of these works as you read through.)
3. **Emergent ontology.** Jessica Wilson, ‘Non-Linearity and Emergent Objects’; Elizabeth Barnes, ‘Emergence and Fundamentality’.
4. **Effective ontology.** Daniel Dennett, ‘Real Patterns’; Don Ross, ‘Rainforest Realism: A Dennettian Theory of Existence’. (NB: This pdf may not print.)
5. **Socially constructed ontology.** Sally Haslanger, ‘Ontology and Social Construction’; Elanor Taylor, ‘Groups and Oppression’.

TRANCHE 2: THE EXISTENCE AND REALITY OF THE NON-FUNDAMENTAL

6. **The existence of the non-fundamental: objections.** Amie Thomasson, ‘Problems of Causal Redundancy’, Chapter 1 of *Ordinary Objects*; Karen Bennett, ‘In Defence of the Non-Fundamental’, chapter 8 of *Making Things Up*.
7. **The reality of the non-fundamental.** Kris McDaniel, ‘Degrees of Being’ (*); Kit Fine, ‘The Question of Ontology’.

TRANCHE 3: THE ROLE OF THE NON-FUNDAMENTAL IN SCIENCE AND METAPHYSICS

8. **The role of the non-fundamental in fundamental theorizing I.** David Lewis, ‘Ramseyan Humility’; Heinz Post, ‘Correspondence, Invariance, and Heuristics: In Praise of Conservative Induction’.
9. **The role of the non-fundamental in fundamental theorizing II.** Tim Lyons, ‘Scientific Realism and the Pessimistic Meta-Modus Tollens’; Simon Saunders, ‘To What Physics Corresponds’ (*), plus excerpts of Saunders and McKenzie, ‘Structure and Logic’ (*).

10. **The domain of metaphysics.** Elizabeth Barnes, ‘Going Beyond the Fundamental: Feminism in Contemporary Metaphysics’, plus excerpts of quoted papers; Kerry McKenzie, ‘On the Prospects for an Effective Metaphysics’.

3 Assessment.

Critical summaries. You will be required to write 3 short critical summaries at the end of each tranche of the course, each worth 10%. These should be between 1000 and 1500 words in length – ie, **short**. The content is pretty much carte blanche: you can either show me that you understand the basic points of contention in the relevant area (eg for tranche 2 or 3), or point to interesting connections between the topics we looked at (eg in tranche 1), or simply take the opportunity to hammer out what you take to be an interesting original observation about a paper that we looked at.

Participation. Your participation will also be graded and worth 10%. Note that I may ask you to give a short and informal presentation on one or two of the readings.

Paper proposal. The paper proposal will consist of two parts. The first part will explain and motivate the focus of your research by answering these questions. (1) What is the general topic area? (2) What are the main views on the topic? (3) What will your focus in that area be? The second part of your proposal will give a section-by-section outline of what you propose to write. This proposal will be discussed in detail with me and will serve as your research plan. This is a pass / fail exercise, and try to keep it short and sweet. I have some suggested titles for your essay, but you are welcome to write on a topic of your choice **provided** it is cleared with me in advance.

Final paper. Your final paper will be worth 60% of the mark, and be an APA style paper of 5,000-6,000 words (**tops**). Depending on numbers, we may have an APA style conference, in which case your final mark will be an amalgam of your paper and presentation. Your paper must be turned in by the end of exams week.

Grading scale.

95 – 100 = A ⁺	78-80=B ⁺	68-70=C ⁺	58-60=D ⁺
85-94=A	75-77=B	65-67=C	50-57=D
81-84=A ⁻	71-74=B ⁻	61-64=C ⁻	< 50=F

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"Integrity of scholarship is essential for an academic community. The University expects that both faculty and students will honor this principle and in so doing protect the validity of University intellectual work. For students, this means that all academic work will be done by the individual to whom it is assigned, without unauthorized aid of any kind.

If you are at all unsure of what acting with integrity demands of you in this context, I'll be happy to discuss it with you.

²Go to <https://students.ucsd.edu/academics/academic-integrity/policy.html>