

Phil 3401 Metaphysics

Class Number 1830 Section WQ6 W 6:05 – 9:25pm 3305B

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This course examines the fundamental subdivision of philosophy known as “metaphysics”, which is the study of the ultimate structure of reality. Taken from the title of Aristotle’s book of the same name, the term designates those philosophical endeavors that attempt to answer the question “what exists?”. This distinguishes itself from the subdivision of philosophy known as “epistemology”, which attempts to answer the question “how do we acquire knowledge?”. It is thus that metaphysics has historically been thought of as the most basic subdivision with philosophy.

Metaphysics studies not only the basic structure of independent reality but attempts to construct a picture of the basic units that underlie that reality – a study called “ontology”. It thus includes debates over whether the fundamental nature of reality is constituted by matter or whether it is constituted by ideas, which would include the related problem of whether or not there are universals, and if so, how do they relate to particulars.

We will use a general text (edited by David Cooper), which gives a historical over-view of the topic, including ancient sources as well as modern, western sources as well as eastern.