

Cutting-Edge Social Metaphysics

Tuesdays 12:30-3:15, Malloy 215

The metaphysics of the social world (including gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, and their intersections) has seen a recent surge in philosophical interest. This seminar will explore cutting-edge social metaphysics, with a strong emphasis on recently published work, forthcoming work, and work in draft. Topics will include the metaphysics of social categories, trans philosophy, intersectionality, the metaphysics of sexual orientation, and social metaphysics as fundamental metaphysics. Several virtual visits from social metaphysicians are planned.

All readings will be posted on Canvas. Readings labeled “background reading” or “further reading” are optional; all others are required.

Assessment

- 30% class participation
- 20% in-class presentation on a topic related to the class (sign up for topics and dates by January 18)
- 10% in-class presentation on your final paper
- 5% one paragraph summary of final paper idea, due March 1 at 11:59pm by email
- 15% first draft of final paper, due April 1 at 11:59pm by email
- 20% tightly written Analysis-sized final draft of final paper, due May 4 at 11:59pm by email

Schedule

January 16: Introduction to the course; What is social metaphysics?

Background reading:

Sally Haslanger, “Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them to Be?” (2000)

Charles Mills, “But What Are You *Really*? The Metaphysics of Race” (1998)

Kate Ritchie, “The Metaphysics of Social Groups” (2015)

January 23: The Metaphysics of Sexual Orientation (I)

(i) Robin Dembroff, “What is Sexual Orientation?” (2016)

(ii) Peter Finochiarro, “Sexual Orientation and Intrinsic Masking” (draft)

(iii) T.R. Whitlow and N.G. Laskowski, “Categorical Phenomenalism about Sexual Orientation” (2022)

Further reading: Esa Díaz-León, “Sexual Orientations: The Desire View” (2022);

Matthew Andler, “Public Health, Political Solidarity, and the Ethics of Orientation Ascriptions” (2021)

January 30: The Metaphysics of Sexual Orientation (II): What Makes Something an Orientation?

- (i) Matthew Andler, "The Sexual Orientation/ Identity Distinction" (2021)
- (ii) Raja Halwani, "Sexual Orientations, Sexual Preferences, and Well-Being" (2023)

Feb 6: Trans Philosophy

- (i) R.A. Briggs and B.R. George, "Science Fiction Double Feature: Trans Liberation on Twin Earth" (draft)
- (ii) Gabe Bergado, "What you learn about human sexuality on 'Twin Earth'" (Interview with R.A. Briggs and B.R. George)
- (iii) Cameron Domenico Kirk-Gianinni, "Gender First" (draft)

Further reading: (i) Rowan Bell, "Being Your Best Self: Authenticity, Morality, and Gender Norms" (forthcoming), (ii) Florence Ashley, "What is it like to have a gender identity?" (2023)

Feb 13: Gender Concepts and Kinds

- (i) Isaac Wilhelm, "Genderspace" (draft)
- (ii) N.G. Laskowski, "Moral Constraints on Gender Concepts" (2020)
- (iii) Jade Fletcher, "Canberra Planning for Gender Kinds" (2023)

Feb 20: The Metaphysics of Intersectionality

- (i) Sara Bernstein, "The Metaphysics of Intersectionality" (2020)
- (ii) Annina Loets, "Intersectional Disadvantage" (forthcoming)

Further reading: Maria Rodó-Zárata, & Marta Jorba, "Metaphors of Intersectionality: Framing the Debate with a New Image" (2020)

Feb 27: Social Metaphysics as Fundamental Metaphysics

- (i) Rebecca Mason and Kate Ritchie, "Social Ontology" (2020)
- (ii) Elanor Taylor, "Substantive Social Metaphysics" (2023)
- (iii) Dee Payton, "Searching for Social Properties" (2023)

Background reading: Sara Bernstein, "Could a Middle Level be the Most Fundamental?" (2020); Mari Mikkola, "Doing Ontology and Doing Justice: What Feminist Philosophy Can Teach Us About Meta-Metaphysics" (2015)

March 5: Anchoring, Grounding, and Social Kinds

- (i) Jonathan Schaffer, "Anchoring as grounding: on Epstein's *The Ant Trap*" (2019)
- (ii) Brian Epstein, "Anchoring versus Grounding: Reply to Schaffer" (2019)
- (iii) Emilie Pagano, "Social construction, social kinds, and exportation" (2023)

Further reading: Karen Bennett, "Kinds and Groups" (draft)

March 12 (no class—spring break)

March 19 (no class—Pacific APA)

March 26: Social Metaphysics and Conceptual Engineering

- (i) Paul-Mikhail Podosky, “Can Conceptual Engineering Actually Promote Social Justice?” (2022)
- (ii) Katharine Jenkins, “Ontic Injustice” (2020)
- (iii) Mark Pinder, “Is Haslanger’s ameliorative project a successful conceptual engineering project?” (2022)

Further reading: Matt Cull, “Engineering is not a luxury: Black feminists and logical positivists on conceptual engineering” (2020)

April 2: Social Categories (I): What are Social Categories?

- (i) Ásta, “The Conferralist Framework” (from *Categories we Live By*) (2016)
- (ii) Ron Mallon, “Social Roles that Matter” (from *The Construction of Human Kinds*) (2018)
- (iii) Matthew Andler, “What is Masculinity?” (2023)

April 9: Social Categories (II): Religious and Ethnic Categories

- (i) David Friedell, “Becoming Non-Jewish” (forthcoming)
- (ii) Sara Bernstein, “Resisting Social Categories” (forthcoming)
- (iii) Sameer Yadav, “Religious Racial Formation Theory and its Metaphysics: A Research Program in the Philosophy of Religion” (2020)

April 16: Social Categories (III): The Metaphysics of Mixed-Race Identities
(feat. Zoom special guest Paul-Mikhail Podosky)

- (i) Paul-Mikhail Podosky, “More Race, Not Less” (draft)
- (ii) Paul-Mikhail Podosky, “What to do with ‘Mixed Race?’” (draft)

April 23: Contradiction, Impossibility, and Indeterminacy and the Social World

- (i) Matt Cull and Emily Bolton, “Contradiction Club: Dialetheism in the Social World” (2020)
- (ii) Sara Bernstein, “Countersocial Counterfactuals” (draft)
- (iii) Kevin Richardson, “Social Construction and Indeterminacy” (2023)

April 30: Class presentations