

PHIL 1480 Metaphysics: Final Paper Topics

Due date: Friday, April 23rd.

Length: 6-9 pages.

- 1 'It is common for several material objects to be in the same place at the same time.'
Discuss.

In your answer, state as clearly as you can an argument for the claim, concerning some ordinary situation, that it is a situation in which two material objects are in the same place at the same time. Then present whatever seems to you to be the strongest competitor to this claim—for example, mereological essentialism, or Burke's view, or van Inwagen's view, or some view of your own devising, making sure that you explain how a proponent of this view should respond to the argument. Finally, you should present—and if you wish, offer a rejoinder to—at least one objection to this competitor view.

- 2 'Persons are a lot like their stories. Just as my story has a part for my childhood, so *I* have a part consisting just of my childhood. Just as my story has a part describing just this instant, so I have a part that is me-at-this-very-instant' (Sider, p. 1). Discuss.

Your paper should include an explanation of the doctrine of temporal parts, a presentation of at least one argument for or against the view, and a critical assessment of this argument.

- 3 'Suppose one had certain (nonoverlapping) objects, the *x*s, at one's disposal; what would one have to do—what *could* one do—to get the *x*s to compose something?' (Van Inwagen, *Material Beings*, p. 31)

Your paper should critically engage with at least one of the arguments for and against various answers to this question considered in *Material Beings* and/or Dorr and Rosen's 'Composition as a Fiction'.

4. Is Nominalism a tenable position?

Your answer should include a succinct explanation of any one form of Nominalism (e.g. Resemblance Nominalism, Trope Nominalism, etc.), and a critical discussion of one or more of the problems faced by that form of Nominalism.

5. 'What are the relations between universals and particulars?'

Your answer should include a presentation of some theory about the way universals and particulars are related—for example, the Bundle theory, or Armstrong's theory of states of affairs—and a critical discussion of one or more of the central arguments for or against this theory.

6. Wildcard question. In consultation with the instructor, you may choose your own topic, having some bearing on the issues discussed in the second two-thirds of the course. Deadline for submitting your proposed topic: Friday, April 16th.