Metaphysics: Monism

PHI 540
Mondays, 3:30-6:20pm
Laura Wooten Hall 201

Instructor
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Course Description
There are many kinds of Monism. What they have in common is their association with “oneness”. We will be looking at a variety of Monistic themes in metaphysics, philosophy of science, and philosophy of mind. For example, we will ask whether there is only one way of existing, whether there is only one object, whether there is only one property, whether there is only one ontological category, whether spacetime and its material contents are ultimately one, whether the mind and body are ultimately one, and whether there is one self that we all share.

Assessment
If you would like to receive a unit for the class: (i) submit a first draft of a term paper (minimum 3,000 words) by April 24, and (ii) submit a final paper (minimum 6,000 words) by May 15. Students from other departments who need a grade should talk to me.

Accessibility
If you require any accommodation for a disability please contact and register with Disability Services. You can contact them directly by phone at (609) 258-8840 or by email at ods@princeton.edu. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Tentative Schedule

Unit 1: (Pure) Metaphysics

Week 1: Ways of Being
Ontological Pluralism - Turner (2010)
The Only Way to Be - Merricks (2019)
   Optional: Pluralism and the Problem of Purity - Builes (2019)
   Ways of thinking about ways of being - Rettler (2021)

Week 2: Monism vs Nihilism
Taking Monism Seriously - Cornell (2016)
From Nihilism to Monism - Schaffer (2007)
   Gunk, Topology, and Measure (sections 1-6) - Arntzenius (2000)
   A Puzzle About Points - Segal (2016)
Week 3: Against Permissivism and Plenitude
Deflationary metaphysics and ordinary language - Button (2020)
Ontology and Arbitrariness - Builes (2022)
  Pluralities and Sets - Linnebo (2010)

Week 4: Monism, Qualitativism, and the Bundle Theory
Individuals: an essay in revisionary metaphysics (sections 1 and 2) - Dasgupta (2009)
The Tools of Metaphysics and the Metaphysics of Science (Chapter 3.9)
The World Just Is The Way It Is - Builes (2021)

  Unit 2: Metaphysics of Science

Week 5: Spacetime Monism
Spacetime the One Substance - Schaffer (2009)
How to Be a Substantivalist Without Getting Shifty About It - Perry (2017)

Week 6: Quantum Monism
Quantum holism: nonseperability as common ground - Ismael and Schaffer (2020)

Week 7: Non-Humean Monism I
How Many Laws Are There? - Builes (MS)
The Metaphysics of Laws of Nature: The Rules of the Game (Chapters 8 and 10) - Ott (2022)
  Optional: The Problem of Nomological Harmony - Cutter and Saad (forthcoming)

Week 8: Non-Humean Monism II
The Action of the Whole - Schaffer (2013)
A Humean Non-Humeanism - Builes (2023)

  Unit 3: Metaphysics of Mind

Week 9: Russellian Monism
Panpsychism and Panprotopsychism - Chalmers (2013)
Idealism and the Mind-Body Problem - Chalmers (2019)

Week 10: Galen Strawson Visit
TBD

Week 11: One Self
One self: The logic of experience - Zuboff (1990)
No-Self Location - Builes (MS)
Week 12: One Self
On the Ātman Thesis Concerning Fundamental Reality - Fasching (2022)
   Optional: On the Identification of Being and Consciousness in Advaita Vedānta - Fasching (2022)