

PHI 540: ESSENCE AND GROUNDING

Fall 2014

Instructor: Boris Kment

Tentative Syllabus

Summary

This course is a selective graduate-level survey of recent metaphysical work on essence and grounding, with special attention to the metaphilosophical implications of this work. The topics to be discussed include the following: the nature and logic of essence, its role in metaphysical explanation and connection to necessity; the nature and logic of grounding, the philosophical work it can do, and its relationship to other explanatory concepts; skepticism about grounding; the role of explanation in metaphysics.

Getting credit for the course

The standard way of earning a unit for the course is to write a term paper, or several shorter papers whose combined philosophical substance is comparable to that of a term paper. Students will also have the option of gaining a unit by take-home exam.

Sample reading list

Audi, "A clarification and defense of the notion of grounding"

Bennett, "Construction Area (No Hard Hat Required)"

———. "There is no special problem with metaphysics"

Correia and Schnieder, "Grounding: an opinionated introduction"

Daly, "Scepticism about grounding"

Dasgupta, "On the Plurality of Grounds"

———. "The Possibility of Physicalism"

Dorr, "What we disagree about when we disagree about ontology"

———. "To be *F* is to be *G*"

Fine, "Guide to ground"

———. "Essence and Modality"

———. "The Logic of Essence"

———. "Senses of Essence"

———. "The question of realism"

———. "Some puzzles of ground"

———. “The pure logic of ground”
Hofweber, “Ambitious, yet modest, metaphysics”
Jenkins, “Is metaphysical dependence irreflexive?”
Kment, *Modality and Explanatory Reasoning*, ch. 6
———. “Modality, Metaphysics, and Method”
Koslicki, “Varieties of ontological dependence”
———. “Essence, Necessity, and Explanation”
Leslie, “Essence and Accident: Against Limited Variety”
Leuenberger, “Grounding and Necessity”
Rayo, *The Construction of Logical Space*, selections
Rosen, “The Limits of Contingency”
———. “Metaphysical dependence: grounding and reduction”
———. “Real Definition”
Schaffer, “Is there a fundamental level?” *Nous* 37, 498–517.
———. “On What Grounds What,” in Chalmer et al. (2009), pp. 347-83.
———. “Grounding as the Primitive Concept of Metaphysical Structure”
———. “Grounding, transitivity, and contrastivity”
———. “Grounding in the Image of Causation”
Sider, *Writing the Book of the World*, chs. 7 and 8
Wilson, “No Work for a Theory of Grounding”