

PHIL60241: Philosophical Logic

Code Credit Rating: 15

Course Convenor(s): Professor Chris Daly

Course Content

Philosophical logic is concerned with various philosophical issues that logic raises. Logic uses certain key notions and we need a deeper philosophical understanding of them. Here are just some of those notions and the issues that they raise.

Identity: everything is identical to itself. But what is it for something to be self-identical? Can identity be understood in other, more fundamental terms? And is identity even a genuine relation?

Existence: Prince Charles exists but Prince Charming does not. Exactly what does this difference consist in? Are there some things that exist but others that do not? Is there something paradoxical about saying that there are things that do not exist? Moreover, do some things have existence contingently whereas others exist necessarily? Is existence a genuine property? Can existence be understood in other, more fundamental terms?

Predication: to predicate a term of something is to describe that something. But what is involved in describing something? Various options are available. In describing something as (say) yellow, do we thereby refer to a certain property (the property of yellowness) and say that the thing has that property? Or in describing something as yellow, do we thereby say that that thing belongs to the set of yellow things? Or would some further option provide a better understanding of predication?

Necessity: it is true that you are reading this paper but it is not a necessary truth. By contrast, it is true that $7 + 8 = 15$ and it is a necessary truth. Exactly what does this difference between truths that are necessary truths and truths that are not consist in? On one view, for it to be a necessary truth that $7 + 8 = 15$ is for it to be true in every 'possible situation' that $7 + 8 = 15$ and for it not to be a necessary truth that you are reading the page is for there to be some 'possible situation' in which you are not reading this page. But how should we understand this talk of possible situations? Does it help us to understand the notion of necessary truth better? Or should we understand the notion of necessary truth in some other way?

The course content follows Colin McGinn's 2001 book *Logical Properties*:

- 1 Identity
- 2 Relative identity
- 3 Existence
- 4 Predication
- 5 Necessity
- 6 Impossible worlds
- 7 Truth

Assessment

Essay 5000 words – 100%

Teaching Methods

1 x 1-hour introductory lecture, 7 x 2-hour seminars

Aims

The course unit aims to:

- To introduce students to certain key topics in metaphysics and philosophical logic.
- To introduce students to the seminal and recent literature on this topic.
- To equip students with the advanced research skills needed for the MRes dissertation and doctoral research.

Objectives

On completion of this unit successful students will be able to demonstrate:

- Complete a substantial piece of research in an area of analytical philosophy;
- Present a substantial piece of research to a critical audience;
- Demonstrate a broad knowledge of seminal and recent literature on an advanced topic in analytical philosophy.
- Conduct independent research, under supervision by an expert supervisor.
- Understand, critically assess, and respond to advanced philosophical writing.

Preliminary Reading

The course explores Colin McGinn's book *Logical Properties* (OUP, 2001). Supplementary reading is on Blackboard, the university's virtual learning platform.