

Metaphysics: Natural Kinds

Course Description

This course will examine a vexed issue in contemporary metaphysics: natural kinds. Are some categories more natural than others? If so, what distinguishes natural categories (or “kinds”) from others? Most philosophers would answer the first question affirmatively, but there is disagreement over the answer to the second. Answers to the second question range from restrictive essentialist ones to permissive pragmatic ones. At the essentialist end of the spectrum, some philosophers regard as natural only those categories that can be defined in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions, or can be identified with essences that pertain to members of those categories in every possible world. At the pragmatic end, other philosophers recognize as natural any category that is useful in generalization, explanation, and prediction, such as those employed in most branches of science and even in commonsense discourse. This course will examine a range of philosophical positions on these and related issues.

Requirements

You will be required to write two essays for this class (3000-3500 words each). The first essay will be worth 30% of your mark, and will be due a few weeks after the beginning of the semester. The second essay will be worth 45% of your mark and will be due during the examination period. Essay topics for both essays will be distributed at least two weeks in advance of the due date. The remaining 25% of your mark for the course will be reserved for attendance and participation, including an in-class presentation and posting a weekly comment on the Moodle discussion board, due by noon on the Wednesday before each class meeting (i.e. roughly 24 hours before class). You will be allowed one unexcused absence and two “passes” on comments. Presentation topics will be assigned by the second week of class.

Late Penalties and Excuses

If you are unable to fulfill any of the requirements for this course by the announced deadlines, you must contact me as soon as possible and always before the deadline in question. If you have a legitimate excuse backed up by supporting documentation (e.g. a medical emergency), your penalties will be reduced or (in some cases) waived. The key is to contact me as soon as possible after a problem arises.

Special Accommodation

Students with health-related, learning, physical, psychiatric, or sensory disabilities who require reasonable accommodations in teaching style or evaluation methods should discuss their concerns with me *as soon as possible* so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

Reading Schedule

* = Required Reading, to be read before the class in question

<p>Week 1 Mar 5</p>	<p>Properties and Predicates</p>	<p>* D. Armstrong, "Properties," in D. H. Mellor and A. Oliver (eds.), <i>Properties</i> (Oxford University Press, 1997), esp. pp.160-167 * D. Lewis, "New Work for a Theory of Universals," <i>Australasian Journal of Philosophy</i> 61 (1983), esp. pp.343-355 and 370-377 D. Armstrong, "Against Ostrich Nominalism," <i>Pacific Philosophical Quarterly</i> 61 (1980) D. Lewis, "Modal Realism at Work: Properties," in D. H. Mellor & A. Oliver, <i>Properties</i> (Oxford University Press, 1997)</p>
<p>Week 2 Mar 12</p>	<p>Kinds and Projectibility</p>	<p>* N. Goodman, "The New Riddle of Induction," in <i>Fact, Fiction and Forecast</i> (Harvard University Press, 1955), pp.59-83 * W. V. Quine, "Natural Kinds," in <i>Ontological Relativity and Other Essays</i> (1969), pp.114-138 I. Hacking, "Entrenchment," in D. Stalker (ed.), <i>Grue: The New Riddle of Induction</i> (Open Court, 1994) P. Gardenfors, "Induction, Conceptual Spaces, and AI," <i>Philosophy of Science</i> 57 (1990), 78-95</p>
<p>Week 3 Mar 19</p>	<p>Kinds as Essences</p>	<p>* H. Putnam, "Meaning and Reference," <i>Journal of Philosophy</i> (1973), 699-711 * T. Wilkerson, "Natural Kinds," <i>Philosophy</i> (1988), 29-42 H. Putnam, "The Meaning of Meaning," in <i>Mind, Language & Reality: Philosophical Papers vol. 2</i> (Cambridge University Press, 1975), 215-271 T. Wilkerson, "Species, Essences, and the Names of Natural Kinds," <i>Philosophical Quarterly</i> 43 (1993)</p>
<p>Week 4 Mar 26</p>	<p>Against Kind Essentialism</p>	<p>* E. Zemach, "Putnam's Theory on the Reference of Substance Terms," <i>Journal of Philosophy</i> (1976), 116-127 * D. H. Mellor, "Natural Kinds," <i>British Journal for the Philosophy of Science</i> (1977), 299-312 M. A. Khalidi, "Carving Nature at the Joints," <i>Philosophy of Science</i> 60 (1993), 100-113 J. Reid, "Natural Kind Essentialism," <i>Australasian Journal of Philosophy</i> 80 (2002), 62-74 S. Mumford, "Kinds, Essences, Powers," <i>Ratio</i> 18 (2005), 420-436</p>
<p>Week 5 Apr 2</p>	<p>Semantics of Kind Terms</p>	<p>* K. Donnellan, "Kripke and Putnam on Natural Kind Terms," in C. Ginet and S. Shoemaker (eds.), <i>Knowledge and Mind: Philosophical Essays</i> (Oxford University Press, 1983), 84-104 * J. LaPorte, "Rigidity and Kind," <i>Philosophical Studies</i> 97 (2000), 293-316 * S. Schwartz, "Kinds, General Terms, and Rigidity," <i>Philosophical Studies</i> 109 (2002), 265-277 M. Cook, "If 'Cat' Is a Rigid Designator, What Does It Designate?" <i>Philosophical Studies</i> 37 (1980), 61-64 S. Schwartz, "Formal Semantics and Natural Kind Terms," <i>Philosophical Studies</i> 38 (1980) K. Sterelny, "Natural Kind Terms," <i>Pacific Philosophical Quarterly</i> 35 (1983)</p>

Week 6 <i>Apr 9</i>	Kinds as Explanatory Categories	<p>* J. Dupre, "Natural Kinds and Biological Taxa," <i>Philosophical Review</i>, 90 (1981), 66-90</p> <p>* M. A. Khalidi, "Natural Kinds and Crosscutting Categories," <i>Journal of Philosophy</i> (1998), 33-50</p> <p>C. Daly, "Defending Promiscuous Realism about Natural Kinds," <i>Philosophical Quarterly</i> (1996), 496-500</p> <p>J. Dupre, "Are Whales Fish?," in D.L. Medin and S. Atran (eds), <i>Folkbiology</i> (MIT Press, 1999), pp.461-476.</p>
Week 7 <i>Apr 16</i>	Kinds as Homeostatic Property Clusters	<p>* R. Boyd, "What Realism Implies and What It Does Not," <i>Dialectica</i> (1989), 5-29</p> <p>* R. Millikan, "Historical Kinds and the 'Special Sciences,'" <i>Philosophical Studies</i> 95 (1999), 45-65</p> <p>R. Boyd, "Kinds, Complexity and Multiple Realization," <i>Philosophical Studies</i> 95 (1999), 67-98</p> <p>R. Boyd, "Homeostasis, Species, and Higher Taxa," in Wilson (ed.), <i>Species</i> (MIT Press, 1999), 141-185</p>
Week 8 <i>Apr 23</i>	Human Kinds and Interactive Kinds (1)	<p>* I. Hacking, "A Tradition of Natural Kinds," <i>Philosophical Studies</i> (1991), 109-126</p> <p>* R. Boyd, "Realism, Foundationalism, and the Enthusiasm for Natural Kinds," <i>Philosophical Studies</i> (1991), 127-148</p> <p>J. Dupre, "Human Kinds," in J. Dupré (ed), <i>The Latest on the Best</i>, Bradford Books/MIT Press, 1987, pp.327-348</p>
Week 9 <i>Apr 30</i>	Human Kinds and Interactive Kinds (2)	<p>* I. Hacking, "The Looping Effects of Human Kinds," in D. Sperber (ed.) <i>Causal Cognition</i> (Oxford University Press, 1996), 351-383</p> <p>* A. Thomasson, "Realism and Human Kinds," <i>Philosophy and Phenomenological Research</i> 67 (2003), 580-609</p> <p>R. Cooper, "Why Hacking Is Wrong about Human Kinds," <i>British Journal for the Philosophy of Science</i> 55 (2004), 73-85</p> <p>M. A. Khalidi, "Interactive Kinds," <i>British Journal for the Philosophy of Science</i>, forthcoming</p>
Week 10 <i>May 7</i>	Race and Gender (1)	<p>* P. Kitcher, "Race, Ethnicity, Biology, Culture," in L. Harris (ed.) <i>Racism</i> (Humanity Books, 1999), pp. 87-117</p> <p>* R. Andreasen, "A New Perspective on the Race Debate," <i>British Journal for the Philosophy of Science</i> 49 (1998)</p>
Week 11 <i>May 14</i>	Race and Gender (2)	<p>* S. Haslanger, "Gender and Race: What Are They? What Do We Want Them To Be?" <i>Nous</i> 34 (2000)</p> <p>* K. A. Appiah, "Race, Culture, Identity: Misunderstood Connections, Part I." In <i>Color Conscious: The Political Morality of Race</i> OR Appiah in Harris (ed.), <i>Racism</i></p>

Some online resources:

Bibliography on Natural Kinds:

<http://www.bris.ac.uk/metaphysics/science/bibliographies/naturalkindsbibliographies.html>

MIT Course: Classification, Natural Kinds, and Conceptual Change:

<http://ocw.mit.edu/OcwWeb/Linguistics-and-Philosophy/24-892Spring-2004/CourseHome/index.htm>

Recent survey articles:

A. Bird and E. Tobin, "Natural Kinds," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*

K. Koslicki, "Natural Kinds and Natural Kind Terms," *Philosophy Compass* 2008