Eastern Illinois University  
New Course Proposal  
PHI 3500, Metaphysics

1. Catalog Description
   a) PHI 3500
   b) Metaphysics
   c) (3-0-3)
   d) S of odd-numbered years
   e) Metaphysics
   f) This course is an examination of contemporary analytical metaphysics: topics include the nature of truth, identity (including personal identity), possible worlds, material constitution and freedom of the will. WI
   g) Prerequisites: Three semester hours in philosophy or permission of the instructor
   h) Spring 2005

2. Student Learning Objectives and Evaluation
   a) The student learning objectives are:
      • Students will list the contemporary issues in metaphysics.
      • Students will demonstrate that they can apply the abstract philosophical analyses of identity and possibility to practical problems of human life and will.
      • Students will apply empirical research in the physical sciences to philosophical theorizing.
      • Students will write clear and comprehensive essays in the style of analytic philosophy.
      • Students will identify and construct logically sound arguments such as dilemmas, *reductio ad absurdum* arguments, inferences to the best explanation, etc.
   
   b) Assessment and Grading
      
      Students will be evaluated on the basis of three in-class essay exams and one 5 -7 page argumentative essay.
      The in-class exams consist of a series of five to ten essay questions. Students are asked to trace out the arguments and theories that we have been working with and construct their own argumentative critiques.
      The last exam will include questions that span the entire course and will be given as a final exam.

      Student achievement of the stated objectives will be assessed and grades earned based on the following activities:
      
      • Students will list the contemporary issues in metaphysics. (Exam IV)
      • Students will demonstrate that they can apply the abstract philosophical analyses of identity and possibility to practical problems of human life and will. (Exam III)
      • Students will apply empirical research in the physical sciences to philosophical theorizing. (Exam I)
      • Students will write clear and comprehensive essays in the style of analytic philosophy. (Exam I, Paper II, Exam III, Exam IV)
      • Students will identify and construct logically sound arguments such as dilemmas, *reductio ad absurdum* arguments, inferences to the best explanation, etc. (Exam I, Paper II, Exam III, Exam IV)
Exam I is worth 20%
Exam II is worth 25%
Exam III (The Final Exam) is worth 30%
Paper I is worth 25%

Each exam and paper is given a numeric score.
Grades will be calculated on the scale:

90% or above  A
80-89     B
70-79   C
60-69   D
below 60  F

c) This course is technology-enhanced, but not technology-delivered.

d) This is not a 4000-level course.

e) This course is “writing-intensive.” The definition of a writing-intensive course is this: In such courses several writing assignments and writing activities are required. These assignments and activities, which are to be spread over the course of the semester, serve the dual purpose of strengthening writing skills and deepening understanding of course content. At least one writing assignment is to be revised by the student after it has been read and commented on by the instructor. In writing-intensive courses the quality of students’ writing should constitute no less than 35% of the final course grade. This course meets these requirements. The exams and paper are spread over the semester. We strengthen writing skills in all assignments. Before exams, the instructor will coach students on how to write argumentative essays. Students are required to submit a rough draft of their paper. I comment on it in a meeting with each student before the paper is submitted for a grade. All grades are based on the ability to write a well-structured argument. In this course at least 50% of the course grade is based on writing quality.

3. Outline of the Course

a) Detailed Course Content:

Overview: The purpose of this course is to introduce students to issues in contemporary analytic metaphysics. The content of this course is subdivided into five topics: Topic 1: Truth, Fiction and Identity. In this section, the basic concepts that will be the building blocks of this course, truth-value, possibility and identity are introduced. Topic 2: Identity and Possible Worlds. In this section, we analyze the paradox of the sameness of identical objects and the common sense view that things could have been other than they are. Topic 3: Material Objects. This section involves a close study of the competing theories of what is required for an object to retain identity through time. In Topic 4: Human Identity and Freedom of the Will, we will examine the complexities of identity and possibility in the metaphysics of human beings - as mind/body pairs, and the metaphysical foundations underlying choice and human action. Finally, in Topic 5: Identity in Action: Thought, Action and Responsibility, we will see how the abstract paradoxes that we have studied resurface in a more compelling practical context – in the nature of the human identity, decision-making and responsible action.

**Topic 1: Truth, Fiction and Identity.** We will introduce the concepts of possibility, necessity and identity, which are core concepts needed to advance to the next set of topics. Metaphysics is very abstract, since students will not see practical and compelling motivations for these abstractions
until late in the course, we will also “warm up” with an essay about truth in fiction. Students will apply the abstract metaphysical concepts of truth and falsity to the concept of fiction.

**Truth: Correspondence and Coherence**  
(Week 1 T)

**Truth in Fiction**  
Reading: “How Can there be Truth in Fiction?” Michael Jubien  
(Week 1 R)

**Some Basic Logical Concepts: Introduction to the Modal Concepts of Truth, Possibility and Necessity**  
(Week 2 T)

**Identity and Leibniz’s Law**  
(Week 2 R)

**Topic 2: Identity and Possible Worlds.** In this section we will begin with the basic paradoxes and puzzles of possibility. What is it for some action or other occurrence to be “possible?” If my own actions are only those that are actual, then is it *me* who performs these possible actions? We look in great detail at some formal paradoxes that these questions suggest. We examine the arguments and metaphysical doctrines proposed to resolve these paradoxes and puzzles.

**A Paradox for Identity and Possible Worlds**  
Reading: “Identity Through Possible Worlds: Some Questions” R. Chisholm  
(Week 3 T/R)

**A Proposed Solution to the Paradoxes: Counterpart Theory**  
Reading: “Counterpart Theory and Quantified Modal Logic” David Lewis (Week 4 T/R)

**Exam 1**  
(Week 5 T)

**Counterpart Theory Continued**  
Reading: “Transworld Heir-lines”  
David Kaplan  
(Week 5 R)

**Problems for Counterpart Theory**  
Reading: “Transworld Identity or Worldbound Individuals?”  
Alvin Plantiga (Week 6 T)


**Topic 3: Material Objects.** In this section we will examine the paradoxes of object and change. How much change is permissible until an object ceases to be what it is? What is an object, the matter of which it is composed or the form that allows it to function? We will look at formal paradoxes that arise from the connection between sameness and change. Also related to these issues is the relationship between part and whole. Are objects the sums of their parts? If so, why can we remove parts and still have the self-same object intact. In order to face these metaphysical challenges we must look very carefully, in great analytic detail, at the concept of identity and sameness.
Identity
Reading: The Concept of Identity chapters one through five, Eli Hirsch
(Week 6 R, Week 7 T/R)

Paper II Due Week 7 T

Material Constitution and Identity
Readings: David Wiggins “On Being in the Same Pace at the Same Time” and “Copper Statues and Pieces of Copper”
(Week 8 T/R)

Parts and Object Wholes
Reading: “The Doctrine of Arbitrary Undetached Parts” Peter Van Inwagen
(Week 9 T)

Growth and a Sort of Reply: Mereological Essentialism
Reading: “Identity Through Time” R. Chisholm
(Week 9 R)

A Novel Solution
Readings: “Preserving the Principle of One Object to a Place” E. Burke and “Dion’s Left Foot” Carter
(Week 10 T/R)


Topic 4: Personal Identity and Freedom of the Will. Now we apply concepts covered in Topic 2 and 3 to questions of human nature and personal identity. What is it to be a human being? Why can we change, yet remain the same person? In what ways can we change and remain the same person? We will look at new paradoxes that stem from the challenge of human beings as “objects” with both a physical and psychological component. The paradoxes of identity between the body and mind.

Personal Location: Mind or Body?
Reading: “Where Am I?” Daniel Dennett (Week 11 T/R)

Exam III: (Week 12 T)

The Relationship between Memory, Psychology and Identity
Reading: “Personal Identity and Memory” Sydney Shoemaker
And “Personal Identity” Derek Parfit (Week 12 R /Week 13 T)
Topic 5: **Identity in Action: Thought, Freedom and Responsibility**. Persons make choices based on judgments, thoughts of what ought to be the case and sometimes human beings choose against their own best judgment, yet a unitary person is held responsible for those choices. In this section we will carefully examine the intersection of identity, moral choices and responsibility.

**Moral Responsibility**
Reading: “Alternative Possibilities and Moral Responsibility” Harry Frankfurt (Week 13 R/Week 14 T)

**Best Judgments and the Divided Mind**
(Week 14 R/Week 15 T)

Week 15 R: Review for the Final Exam

b) This is not a technology-delivered course.

4. **Rationale**
   a) Purpose and Need: Usually, undergraduate curriculum in philosophy includes metaphysics, epistemology and the philosophy of science in a selection of course offerings in contemporary analytic philosophy. Currently, we do not have a metaphysics course. This course will fill that need.

   b) This course is appropriate for philosophy students who have been introduced to the basics of constructing philosophical arguments. This would be introduced in any 1000- or 2000-level course in the philosophy department. So, a 3000-level is appropriate for this course. This course would have no other pre-requisites.

   c) Similarity to existing courses. This course is not similar to any of our current courses.

   d) Impact on Program. This course will be a new choice within the “metaphysics” component of the undergraduate major program.

5. **Implementation**
   a) This course will be assigned initially to Teresa Britton.
   b) This course entails no additional cost to our students.
   c) Texts in use in this course are:


6. **Community College Transfer**: A community college course will not be judged equivalent to this course.

7. **Date Approved by the department**: 12/5/03

8. **Date approved by the college curriculum committee**: 4/7/04

9. **Date approved by CAA**: 4/29/04 CGS: ____________.