New Work in Ontology and Classification

Seminar, Summer Semester 2017
Tue. 14:00-16:00 h (c.t.), start Tue. 11 April 2017
Room B 410, Im Moore 21 (Bldg. 1146), rear entrance (inner courtyard), fourth floor

Course concept and aims

Ontology is the area of philosophy that can be described as the study of what there is - that is, the study of being and more specifically of the study of what kinds of things there are in the world. Ontology is a central part of metaphysics, and it plays a central role too in the philosophy of science. Part of this area of work is the examination of how we classify phenomena, objects, events, behaviors, disorders, etc., both in the sciences and in everyday contexts. Relevant questions posed here include: Why do we classify things they ways we do, rather than differently? What are the theoretical and practical foundations of the classifications we use? What is the nature of the kinds and categories into which we classify things? In this course we will read and discuss a number of recent research articles from this area of philosophy. All texts will be available to course participants; the course will be taught in English.

The general **aim** of the course is to provide students with an introduction to contemporary debates in the area of ontology. As **learning objectives** upon completion of the course students should be able to

- explain in their own words the various topics, issues, ideas etc. that were discussed in the course;
- develop their own position regarding the topics that were discussed;
- develop their own position regarding the aims of ontology as a philosophical area of inquiry.

With respect to **general competences** after completion of the course students should be able to

- read and understand complicated argumentative texts;
- to identify the principal ideas, arguments, etc. in such texts and to separate them from side issues;
- to present their own work (orally and/or in writing) in a clear and concise way.

Organizational and formal issues

The course is an integral part of the M.A. programs *Philosophy of Science* and the M.Ed. teacher training program for the subject of Philosophy. Students can take the course as part of the following modules:

- M.A. *Philosophy of Science* (Masterstudiengang Wissenschaftsphilosophie): modules "Vertiefung Theoretische Philosophie" (VT), "Philosophie und Geschichte der Naturwissenschaften" (PGN), "Philosophie und Geschichte der Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaften" (PGS), "Theoretische Philosophie der Lebenswissenschaften" (TPL);
- M.Ed. teacher training Master (*Masterstudiengang Lehramt an Gymnasien*), Philosophy: "Vertiefungsmodul zu einem systematischen Schwerpunkt" (VMs);
- Teacher training certificate program, third subject (*Zertifikatsprogramm Drittes Fach für das Lehramt an Gymnasien*), Philosophy: "Vertiefungsmodul zu einem systematischen Schwerpunkt" (VMs).

In addition to the abovementioned programs, the course is open to interested students from all other areas, as well as guests and auditors. In case of a shortage of places in the course, students from the

programs listed above will enjoy priority admittance. Participants from programs not listed above should contact the student advisor of their own program to discuss whether they can obtain credits for participation.

The course will be supported by a website in the university's online learning environment, Stud.IP (https://elearning.uni-hannover.de/index.php). On this website you will find information about the course, as well as notifications of changes in the program, or time or location of individual sessions. All participants **must register** for the course on the course website. All course readings (listed below in the course plan under "required reading" and "optional background reading") will be made available to registered participants as downloadable PDFs on the course website.

All participants are expected to **actively participate** in the sessions, for example by asking questions during the lectures or engaging in discussions with the audience on lecture topics. The lecture sessions will contain **dedicated question/discussion sections** focused on questions from course participants about the required readings or related issues. Accordingly, participants are expected to have read the required readings for each session, and to **have formulated questions about the text(s)**, e.g., about things they have not understood, with which they disagree, or that for any other reason they find important to discuss with the group. Participants are **expected to attend all sessions**.

Students in the M.A. program *Philosophy of Science* or the M.Ed. and certificate programs *Lehramt an Gymnasien* can obtain 5 credit points and have to fulfill the following **course requirements**:

1. **Preparation:** Thoroughly read and prepare the required readings – this includes detailed reading of all texts and **writing down a few questions and/or topics for discussion** that you would like to raise after the lecture.
2. **Questions:** Get together with 1 or 2 study partners and discuss the questions / topics that you have written down while preparing the readings. For every class session every group of 2-3 participants must **hand in a set of questions / topics for discussion** on a single sheet of A4 paper on the day of the session.
3. **Participation:** Everyone is required to **participate actively** in class.
4. **Presentation:** You have to give a presentation of at most 20 min. The presentation is intended to give **impulses for the discussion** and should not be an exhaustive overview of the readings for your session, but rather a presentation of the questions you came up with while reading the texts, the difficulties you encountered when reading, issues you want to discuss with the group, and so on. In addition to the presentation you should assemble a **list of 5-8 questions** about the reading in advance to the session in which you will present, as well as write a **protocol of the group discussion** after your presentation (to be handed in at the latest 1 week after your presentation).

Students who want to be examined in the context of finalizing a module in one of the philosophy programs ("*Modulprüfung*") should make separate arrangements with the instructor.

The course credit points are calculated as follows:

13 sessions × 1½ h. =	19 ½ h.
12 x ± 5 h. preparation per session ≈	60 h.
Preparation of presentation (± 4 days = ± 32 h.) ≈	32 h.
Development of questions for presentation (± 2 days = ± 16 h.) ≈	16 h.
Writing of discussion transcript (± 2 days = ± 16 h.) ≈	16 h.

Total =	143 ½ h. ≈ 5 CP.

Contact details

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Course plan

1. (11.04.17) *Introduction*
    No readings.

2. (18.10.16) *What is ontology? (1)*
    Francesco Berto & Matteo Plebani (2015): *Ontology and Metaontology: A Contemporary Guide*, Intro-
        duction ('What is ontology? What is metaontology?'), Sec. 1-4, London: Bloomsbury, pp. 1-9.
    Francesco Berto & Matteo Plebani (2015): *Ontology and Metaontology: A Contemporary Guide*, Chapter
        2 ('1948: On what there is'), London: Bloomsbury, pp. 23-33.

3. (25.04.17) *What is ontology? (2)*
    Willard V.O. Quine (1948): 'On what there is', *Review of Metaphysics* 2: 21-38.

4. (02.05.17) *What is ontology? (3)*
    Francesco Berto & Matteo Plebani (2015): *Ontology and Metaontology: A Contemporary Guide*, Chapter
        3 ('The standard view'), London: Bloomsbury, pp. 34-52.

– (09.05.17) *no class*

5. (16.05.17) *The tradition: ontology as system building (1)*
    E.J. Lowe (2006): *The Four-Category Ontology: A Metaphysical Foundation for Natural Science*, Chapter
        1 ('Ontological categories and categorial schemes'), Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 3-19.

6. (**Saturday** 20.05.17) *The tradition: ontology as system building (2)* (additional session)
    E.J. Lowe (2006): *The Four-Category Ontology: A Metaphysical Foundation for Natural Science*, Chapter
        2 ('The four-category ontology and its rivals'), Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 20-33.

7. (23.05.17) *New views on how ontology should be done (1)*
    Amie L. Thomasson (2009): 'The easy approach to ontology', *Axiomathes* 19: 1-15.

8. (30.05.17) *New views on how ontology should be done (2)*
    Achille Varzi (2011): 'On doing ontology without metaphysics', *Philosophical Perspectives* 25: 407-
        423.

– (06.06.17) *no class – week without classes*

9. (13.06.17) *New views on how ontology should be done (3)*
    David Ludwig (2014): 'Disagreement in scientific ontologies', *Journal for General Philosophy of Science*
        45: 119-131.

10. (20.06.17) *Classification & natural kinds (1)*
    Muhammad Ali Khalidi (in press): 'Natural kinds as nodes in causal networks', *Synthese*, online first publication.

11. (27.06.17) *Three views of kinds of artifacts (1)*
    Crawford L. Elder (2014): 'Artifacts and mind-dependence', in: Maarten P.M. Franssen, Peter Kroes, Thomas A.C. Reydon & Pieter Vermaas (Eds): *Artefact Kinds: Ontology and the Human-Made World*, Heidelberg: Springer, pp. 27-43.

12. (04.07.17) *Three views of kinds of artifacts (2)*
    Amie L. Thomasson (2014): 'Public artifacts, intentions, and norms', in: Maarten P.M. Franssen, Peter Kroes, Thomas A.C. Reydon & Pieter Vermaas (Eds): *Artefact Kinds: Ontology and the Human-Made World*, Heidelberg: Springer, pp. 45-62.

13. (11.07.17) *Three views of kinds of artifacts (3)*
    Maarten Franssen & Peter Kroes (2014): 'Artefact kinds, ontological criteria and forms of mind-dependence', in: Maarten P.M. Franssen, Peter Kroes, Thomas A.C. Reydon & Pieter Vermaas (Eds): *Artefact Kinds: Ontology and the Human-Made World*, Heidelberg: Springer, pp. 63-83.

Suggested further reading (very small selection)

Francesco Berto & Matteo Plebani (2015): *Ontology and Metaontology: A Contemporary Guide*, London: Bloomsbury.
Nikk Effingham (2013): *An Introduction to Ontology*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
Dale Jacquette (2002): *Ontology*, Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Useful internet resources:
Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy (http://www.iep.utm.edu/).
Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (http://plato.stanford.edu/).