METAPHYSICS AND EPISTEMOLOGY

WINTER SEMESTER 2023–24

The course deals with two central branches of philosophy, metaphysics and epistemology. It aims to acquaint students with recent and contemporary approaches to various philosophical issues that come under those branches. So the character of the course is systematic and not historical; that is, there is limited coverage of philosophers who lived before the last seventy years. After an introduction, the course discusses some topics in metaphysics, then proceeds to the issue of truth (which comes under both metaphysics and epistemology) and subsequently discusses some topics in epistemology.

We will cover the following issues:
1. **Introduction**: What are metaphysics and epistemology? A survey of those branches.
2. **The problem of universals**. What are universals? Do they exist? If so, where are they?
3. **Causation**. What is it for an event to cause another event?
4. **Freedom and determinism**. Is it possible that our world is deterministic and yet, at least sometimes, we decide and act freely?
5. **Personal identity over time**. What are the necessary and sufficient conditions for a person who exists at a time t and a person who exists at a later time t' to be one and the same?
6. **Necessity and possible worlds**. The concepts of necessity and possibility. The ontology of possible worlds (mainly, D. Lewis's theory about them).
7. **Truth (A)**. The correspondence theory of truth and the coherence view on truth.
8. **Truth (B)**. Pragmatism about truth, the redundancy theory and minimalism about truth.
9. **Scepticism**. Kinds of scepticism, sceptical arguments, and some answers to them.
10. **Definitions of knowledge**. What are the necessary and sufficient conditions in order for someone to know that something is the case?
11. **Justification of beliefs**. When is a belief justified and not arbitrary?
12. **Induction**. What is induction? The old and the new riddle of induction.
13. **A priori knowledge**. What is a priori knowledge? Is it possible? If so, what can we know a priori?