

# RELATIONS

**Meetings:** Spring 2017. Tuesdays 3:30-5:55pm, Philosophy Seminar Room

**Professor Info:**

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**Course Website:**

[http://ericashumener.net/relations\\_seminar/](http://ericashumener.net/relations_seminar/)

Readings are password protected:

username: loves

password: islovedby

## I. Course Description.

In this class, we will look at the nature of relations in metaphysics as well as theories in metaphysics, philosophy of science (and maybe other topics?) that appeal to the distinction between polyadic relations and monadic properties. We'll try to determine why this distinction is supposed to make a difference and whether it actually does make a difference.

This class will be broken up into three units:

### **Unit 1: Pure Metaphysics of Relations:**

In this unit we will address the following questions: Is a relation identical to its converse (Williamson, Dorr)? How do we determine the arity of a relation (Fine, Macbride, me if I get my sh\*\* together)? Is "directionality" built into relations (Fine)? What is the difference between internal and external relations (Bradley, Moore, Lewis)? Is there reason to think that internal relations are more fundamental than external relations or vice versa (Bradley, Russell, Schaffer)?

### **Unit 2: Applied Metaphysics of Relations I: Causal Structuralism.**

In this unit, we will look to a kind of metaphysical privileging of certain kinds of relations: causal relations. Do properties have special natures that confer causal powers onto the objects that possess them (sometimes these natures are referred to as "quiddities", Lewis (2009))? Alternatively, perhaps there is nothing more to the nature of properties (at least a

wide variety of physical properties) than their “causal profile” (Hawthorne (2001), Berenstain (2016))?

### **Unit 3: Applied Metaphysics of Relations II: The Metaphysics of Quantity.**

By “quantities” I’ll mean physical quantities like mass (all kinds), electric charge, density, velocity, even spatiotemporal distance relations sometimes. Some metaphysicians think we should analyze certain quantities (electric charge, for example) as certain kinds of monadic properties (Mundy, Eddon). Others think we should analyze them as relations (Field, Dasgupta, Perry). We’ll examine why these people think these things.

## **II. Course Requirements.**

Write me a paper! Do it by May 1st! I don’t care how long it is, but if it’s shorter than 8 pages or longer than 40 pages, I will be frightened.

Grade Breakdown:

Paper: 60%

Participation: 40% If you are enrolled in the class, please send at least one discussion question about the reading at least 30 minutes before class on Tuesdays.

Deadlines:

**March 6:** By this date, please come talk to me if you are planning to write a paper. I would like to make sure that you are on a good track. We will approve a topic.

**April 1:** Send me a paper outline.

**May 1:** Turn in the paper.

## **III. Reading Schedule (Subject to Change)**

**January 17:** Syllabus. Introduction.

**January 24:** Williamson, “Converse Relations” and Fine “Neutral Relations”.

**January 31:** Finish Fine.

MacBride, “Neutral Relations Revisited”

*Optional:* Reply from Fine, “Response to Fraser MacBride”

**February 7:** Dorr, “Non-Symmetric Relations”

**February 14:** Schaffer, “The Internal Relatedness of All Things”, F.H. Bradley excerpts.

**February 21:** Wang, “Fundamentality and Modal Freedom”

**February 28:** Dasgupta, “Individuals”

**March 7:** Spring Break

**March 14:** Lewis “Ramseyan Humility”

**March 21:** Hawthorne “Causal Structuralism”

**March 28:** Berenstain “What a Structuralist Theory of Properties Could not be”

**April 4:** Eddon, “Fundamental Properties of Fundamental Properties” (Background: Mundy’s “Metaphysics of Quantity”)

**April 11:** Dasgupta, “Absolutism vs. Comparativism about Quantity”. Field excerpts from *Science without Numbers*, full throttle edition.

**April 18:** Mark Wilson will visit?

## IV. Make-up Classes

Two classes we need to talk about are the make-up class (because we missed January 10) and the last class period April 25. We can continue with the topics from units 1-3 or we could embark on a new topic (look at the list below). One major issue is that I know very little about the topics below (with the exception of the last one).

Potential Topics:

1. Structural Realism (but Mazviita just did this! Esfeld, Lam, Ladyman??, Greaves, Chakravartty, trillions of others)
2. Relations in Hegel (Hegel himself?????)
3. Relations in philosophy of action. (Ford?, Thompson????, Anscombe????)
4. Aristotle/Plato/Suarez on Relations (Marmodoro???...)
5. Determinable/Determinate Relations. (J. Wilson, Funkhouser)
6. The Identity Relation (Wehmeier, A. Burgess, I have a paper on the arity of the identity relation I’d love to get feedback on, but it’s in the middle of an overhaul )