

Syllabus

Phil 753: Grounding

Spring 2023

1 Class Meeting and Contact Information

Class Meetings: Thursday 1:00PM - 3:30PM, South College Room E301

<PROF_FIRST_NAME> <PROF_LAST_NAME> (he/him), *email:*

<PROF_EMAIL>

Office Hours (via Zoom): Tue 1:00PM - 2:00PM

Office Hours Zoom Link: <LINK_ZOOM>

1.1 Requirements and Grading

For graduate students: 60% of your grade will be determined by either a final paper or a final take-home exam (you'll get to choose which). 10% of your grade will come from a weekly log on the readings that you will write up, and 30% will come from your class presentations. (Undergraduates are not required to present; if so, their grade will just be determined by the final paper/exam and the weekly log write-ups.)

1.1.1 Final Paper/Exam:

At the end of the semester you will have the option of either taking a take-home exam, or of writing a final paper.

The take-home exam option will consist of several essay prompts. If you choose to take the exam, I'll send it to after the final class in the semester, and it will be due at the end of finals week.

The final paper option is expected to be roughly 10-15 pages (for undergraduates) or 15-30 pages (for graduate students), though those are only rough guidelines. The final paper will be due on June 31st.

1.1.2 Weekly Log:

Your weekly log entries on the readings will be submitted on Moodle. They're due Wednesday at 1pm (24 hours before class).

These entries should consist of: (i) three questions you have about the readings, and (ii) an attempt to answer one of the three questions you've raised.

The purpose of these assignments is to prompt you to start thinking about the readings, and to be ready to ask some questions about the readings, before class begins. As such I won't be carefully grading these entries; just marking them as "satisfactory" or "unsatisfactory". (You can assume they're satisfactory unless I tell you otherwise.)

1.1.3 Class Presentations:

Each graduate student will lead discussion in one of the classes on one of the topics we discuss. These discussions should include a handout. These discussions can be anywhere from 30 minutes to half the class, depending on what you feel like covering/talking about. (You'll need to let me know what you're aiming for ahead of time, of course!)

You can choose one of two things to present on. First, you can choose to present on that week's topic. Second, you can instead choose to discuss a particular proposed use of grounding.

These will not be presentations on a particular paper. Nor are you expected to provide some authoritative discussion of the topic. Rather, these presentations will be more of an exploratory nature, and will consist of attempts to skim and get a feel for some bit of the literature on this topic, and try to discuss some of the relevant issues, and questions you have regarding this topic.

We should settle on a presentation topic at least a couple weeks before you present. Once we've settled that, part of your job will be to let me know what readings you'd like to assign/omit. (Some possible readings for some of the subjects are described below. But you're encouraged to suggest cutting readings or parts of readings that aren't relevant to what you want to discuss, as well as adding readings or sections of readings that you want to go over.)

1.2 Readings

All of the readings will be posted as pdfs on Moodle. I've describe a *very* tentative topic-syllabus below. We'll decide on the actual topics, and readings, as we go, depending on how much background people have, and what issues people are interested in. The potential readings suggested below come from Routledge Handbook of Metaphysical Grounding, edited by Michael Raven.

2/9: Introduction

2/16: Basics and (Some) Motivations

- Raven volume, Chapter 1 "Introduction"
- Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy entry on "Metaphysical Grounding", sections 1.4 and 3.1

2/23: No Class

3/2: Is Grounding a Strict Partial Order?

- Possible Readings: Raven volume, Chapter 17 "Strict Partial Order"

3/9: How Fine-Grained is Grounding?

- Possible Readings: Raven volume, Chapter 15 "Granularity"

3/23: What is the Logic of Grounding?

- Possible Readings: Raven volume, Chapter 32 "Logic"

3/30: What are the Modal Features of Grounding? (And how does grounding relate to supervenience?)

- Possible Readings: Raven volume, Chapter 10 "Necessity"
- Possible Readings: Raven volume, Chapter 24 "Modality"

4/6: How Does Grounding Relate to Fundamentality? (And how does Grounding relate to fundamental properties?)

- Possible Readings: Raven volume, Chapter 23 "Fundamentality"
- Possible Readings: Raven volume, Chapter 27 "Structure"

4/13: Skepticism About Grounding

- Possible Readings: Raven volume, Chapter 11 “Skeptical Doubts”
- Possible Readings: Raven volume, Chapter 12 “Anti-Skeptical Rejoinders”

4/20: Applications/Further Topics

4/27: Applications/Further Topics

5/4: Applications/Further Topics

5/11: Applications/Further Topics

Some Potential Further Topics/Applications:

- Any of the topics mentioned in the 2/9 readings
- Laws of Nature [chapter 31]
- Physicalism [chapter 35]
- Emergence [chapter 21]
- Varieties of Grounding [chapter 13]
- Ontology [chapter 25]
- Laws of Metaphysics [chapter 30]
- Meta-Ground [chapter 9]
- Infinite Descent [chapter 16]
- Puzzles [chapter 18]