

Syllabus and Course Outline
PHIL5180/PHIL7180
Special Seminar on Selected Philosophical Issues
Fundamentality and Metaphysical Dependence
Chinese University of Hong Kong, April 5–May 3 2024

Class meetings: Fridays 2:30pm–5:15pm, Lee Shau Kee Building 212 (LSK-212)
Professor: Jessica Wilson; jessica.m.wilson@utoronto.ca
Teaching Assistant: Peng Zhou (PHD/3); pengzhou@link.cuhk.edu.hk

In this course we will explore the topics of fundamentality and metaphysical dependence. These topics are of great interest, since many scientific, religious, and philosophical views presuppose that there is *metaphysical structure*, whereby some goings-on are fundamental, and some are not; and where the non-fundamental goings-on metaphysically depend, one way or another, on fundamental goings-on. In the first session, I'll motivate the topic, and present my preferred 'Fundamentality First' approach to metaphysical structure, coupling a primitivist account of fundamentality with a pluralist account of metaphysical dependence. In the second session, we'll consider some skeptical approaches to metaphysical structure, due to John Heil and Justin Clarke-Doane. In the third session, we'll consider Karen Bennett's pluralist 'building-based' approach to metaphysical structure. In the fourth session, we'll consider Jonathan Schaffer's and Michael Raven's 'grounding-based' approaches to metaphysical structure. I am writing a book titled *Fundamentality and Metaphysical Dependence*, so some of the recommended readings will involve chapter drafts of this manuscript. I'm looking forward to your input!

1 Mechanics

This course will have a seminar format, so please come to class having closely read the texts, and with questions and comments to contribute.

2 Readings

All readings for a session will be available on the Blackboard site for the course two weeks prior to the session.

3 Course requirements

Please submit a paper of no more than 4000 words on any issue covered by the course. **The paper is due by Sunday, May 12 2024, 11:59pm.** For grade descriptors, please refer to http://phil.arts.cuhk.edu.hk/phidept/UG/Grade_descriptors.pdf

4 Academic honesty and plagiarism

Attention is drawn to University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and to the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations. Details may be found at <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/>. For assignments in the form of a computer-generated document that is principally text-based and submitted via VeriGuide, the statement, in the form of a receipt, will be issued by the system upon students' uploading of the soft copy of the assignment. Assignments without the receipt will not be graded by teachers. Only the final version of the assignment should be submitted via VeriGuide.

5 Schedule overview

Friday April 12: The Appearances of Metaphysical Structure

Required reading:

- Tuomas Tahko, ‘Fundamentality’
- Jessica Wilson, ‘The Fundamentality First Approach to Metaphysical Structure’

Recommended reading:

- Jessica Wilson, ‘The Appearances of Metaphysical Structure’ (draft Chapter 1 of *Fundamentality and Metaphysical Dependence*)

Friday April 19: Skeptical Challenges to Metaphysical Structure

Required reading:

- John Heil, ‘Levels of Reality’
- Justin Clarke-Doane, ‘Modal Objectivity’

Recommended reading:

- Jessica Wilson, ‘Skeptical Challenges to Metaphysical Structure’ (draft Chapter 3 of *Fundamentality and Metaphysical Dependence*)

Friday April 26: Building-based Approaches to Metaphysical Structure

Required reading:

- Karen Bennett, *Making Things Up*, Chapters 1, 2, 5, 6

Recommended reading:

- Jessica Wilson, ‘Lightweight Approaches to Metaphysical Structure’ (draft Chapter 4 of *Fundamentality and Metaphysical Dependence*)

Friday May 3: Grounding-based Approaches to Metaphysical Structure

Required reading:

- Jonathan Schaffer, ‘On What Grounds What’
- Michael Raven, ‘New Work for a Theory of Ground’

Recommended reading:

- Jessica Wilson, ‘Grounding-based Approaches to Metaphysical Structure’ (draft Chapter 5 of *Fundamentality and Metaphysical Dependence*)

Saturday May 4: Paper topics

- On or before this date, please contact Professor Wilson (email above) with one or two candidate paper topics. She will work with you to develop a suitable topic.

Sunday May 12: Paper submission

- The paper for the course (no more than 4000 words) is due by 11:59pm.