



NOTHING

Philosophy 431 | Fall 2016
Prof. Cowling

Worries about nothing have posed challenges for our best logical, scientific, philosophical, and semantic theories since antiquity. How, for instance, are we to understand physical theories that posit voids, holes, or absences, when such things, by definition, do not exist? What explains our ability to say that certain things don't exist while, in saying so, we seem to succeed in speaking about exactly those things? Why are certain claims true of round squares but not unicorns (and *vice versa*) even though there are neither round squares nor unicorns? Could there have simply been absolutely nothing at all and what, if anything, might explain why there is (perhaps thankfully) something? This course will examine these and various other puzzles that arise in thinking carefully about what there is not.