Summer 2011
Metaphysics MA Comp Exam

Answer one question from each part. Time limit: 4 hours

Part I
1. Water is H2O. Many philosophers think it is necessarily H2O. Why might someone think this? Why might someone deny it? Who is right?
2. Is everything actual?
3. Some contemporary philosophers are "fictionalists" about mathematical objects; others are "fictionalists" about possible worlds. What is fictionalism about a sort of object, and how is it different, if at all, from instrumentalism (about that sort)? Evaluate reasons for and against fictionalism with respect to some particular sort of object.

Part II
4. Under what conditions do many objects compose one thing?
5. Are objects bundles of properties? State, explain, and evaluate the two best arguments for and the two best arguments against the bundle theory of properties.
6. What is the "growing block" theory of time? What are its major advantages and disadvantages?

Part III
7. What is "multiple realizability," and what does it show about reducibility? What are the best arguments for and against the multiple realizability of properties in the special sciences?
8. Can causation be understood as a kind of dependence of one event upon another? Discuss why one might think it can, and why one might think it can’t.
9. It is sometimes said that truth is relative to a conceptual scheme, or a version, or some other such thing. What, if any, good reasons are there for saying such a thing? Are there good reasons to deny this?