

Philosophy 363
Fall, 2024

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Office hours – Tuesdays, 11-12pm (i.e., after class) or by appointment

PHILOSOPHY OF PERCEPTION

Perception is fundamental to our daily lives. After all, it provides our primary source of knowledge about the external world. It's also kind of mysterious. For a start, it's unclear what perception would need to be like for it to provide knowledge in the ways we routinely expect. Worse still, plausible answers to this challenge have often seemed to be in tension with known cases of misperception (e.g., illusion and hallucination) as well as findings from cognitive science. In the first part of this course, we will consider these issues. In the second part of the course, we will then note that the science of perception is itself far from settled, with researchers disagreeing on basic questions, such as: Is what you perceive affected by your background beliefs? Is perception essentially conscious? and Can perception be distinguished from thought? If so, how? In this class, we will explore all these controversies and more.

Course Reading:

Each week, you will be assigned papers or book chapters to read. These are all available online and should be easily accessible via the Library website. I only assign readings that are written by clever people. If a reading seems silly, or obviously false, it's not; take a step back and try to think carefully about the ideas being put forward and the specific reasons why the author endorses them. If – after thinking hard and charitably – a paper still seems wrong, or misguided, you might have a good objection! This is great! Please raise it in class or come discuss during my office hours!

Course Assessment:

Your work will be assessed based on:

- (1) An in-class exam on the Tuesday of Week 6 (10% of your final mark)
- (2) Ten 1-page summaries of the week's readings/course engagement (this is worth 10% of your final grade – to get credit for these, the summaries must be submitted **before** the Thursday of the week for which the reading is assigned and you must attend class)
- (3) One 3-page essay, due before the start of class on Week 11 (25% of your final mark)
- (4) A detailed plan of your final essay, to be discussed with me **in-person** in Week 15 (15% of your final mark)
- (5) 6-8 page final essay (worth 40% of your final grade – due December 13th)

In all your assignments, it is completely unacceptable to use the words or ideas of someone else without proper acknowledgment. If you are unsure what counts as plagiarism, see the Trojan Integrity Guide at https://policy.usc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Code-of-Integrity-and-Accountability-Online-Version_FINAL-7-21-2022.pdf and the Undergraduate Guide for Avoiding Plagiarism at <https://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/plagiarism>.

No less egregious is the use of ChatGPT. ChatGPT is very impressive and can produce nicely written essays that are often riddled with factual errors and bizarre statements. It's really important that I be able to check that *you* wrote your essays/responses, and not ChatGPT. **As such, you should be able to provide evidence to this effect.** While this is a pain for all involved, I recommend the following:

- You could write your essays/assignments on Google Docs. This will automatically save each change that is made to the file, thereby documenting its development (with the added bonus of automatically backing up your work!). The link can then be emailed to me.
- You could keep notes, essay plans, or earlier drafts, and be ready to share these (in general, the more you redraft and plan an essay, the better it will be – it's often helpful to save drafts as separate documents anyway to permit bigger structural changes, etc.)
- You could come to my office hours to discuss the ideas you're developing.

I am sorry about having to do this!

Writing Philosophy Papers is Weird. We don't want a survey of everything you've read, or a bunch of unsupported opinions – why would anyone care about these? What we want you to provide is a focused argument for a philosophically non-obvious claim (e.g., a claim that is rejected by some of the people we read about in class). If you're not familiar with writing philosophy papers, I *strongly* recommend looking at some of the following helpful resources:

<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>

https://philosophy.fas.harvard.edu/files/phildept/files/brief_guide_to_writing_philosophy_paper.pdf

<http://www.sfu.ca/philosophy/resources/writing.html>

<https://www.mit.edu/~yablo/writing.html>

<https://www1.cmc.edu/pages/faculty/akind/intro01s/writing.htm>

*You don't need to read all of these – there is lots of overlap.

Also, please come and discuss your essays/assignments with me in my office hours!

Other General Policies

Don't use your laptops or other electronic devices in class – the internet is too tempting, and it will distract you. There is also evidence that you will remember your notes better if they are taken by hand: <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/a-learning-secret-don-t-take-notes-with-a-laptop/>

Students with Disabilities

Students requesting academic accommodations based on a disability should register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) and email me about the requested accommodations. (DSP is located in GFS 120 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number is (213) 740-0776. See also <https://osas.usc.edu/>.) Please get in touch if I can help.

Required Readings:

Part I: Philosophical Theories of Perception

Week 1. What do we want from a theory of perception?

- Fish, W. (2021). 'Introduction' to *Philosophy of Perception: A Contemporary Introduction* (2nd Edition), New York: Routledge.
- Crane, T. & French, C. (2021). 'The Problem of Perception' in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (available here: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/perception-problem/>)

Week 2. Sense Datum Theories

- Fish, W. (2021). 'Sense Datum Theories' in *Philosophy of Perception: A Contemporary Introduction*, (2nd Edition), New York: Routledge.
- Soteriou, M. (2016). 'Sense Datum Theories and the Argument from Hallucination' in *Disjunctivism*, New York: Routledge.

Week 3. Intentional Theories

- Fish, W. (2021). 'The Representational Principle and Intentional Theories' in *Philosophy of Perception: A Contemporary Introduction*, (2nd Edition), New York: Routledge.
- Siegel, S. (2010). 'The Content View' in *The Contents of Visual Perception*, Oxford University Press.

Extra Reading:

- Macpherson, F. (2011). 'Introduction: The Admissible Contents of Perception' in K. Hawley & F. Macpherson (Eds.) *The Admissible Content of Perception*, Wiley Blackwell.

Week 4. Adverbialism and Qualia Theories

- Fish, W. (2021). 'Adverbialism and Qualia Theories' in *Philosophy of Perception: A Contemporary Introduction*, (2nd Edition), New York: Routledge.
- Kind, A. (2008). 'How to believe in Qualia' in E. Wright (Ed.) *The Case for Qualia*, MIT Press.

- Block, N. (2010). 'Attention and Mental Paint' in *Philosophical Issues*, 20 (1): 22-63.

Week 5. Naïve Realism

- Fish, W. (2021). 'Naïve Realism' in *Philosophy of Perception: A Contemporary Introduction*, (2nd Edition), New York: Routledge.
- Logue, H. (2012). 'Why Naïve Realism' in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 112: 211-237.

Extra Readings:

- Soteriou, M. (2016). Chapters 3 & 4 of *Disjunctivism*, New York: Routledge.

Part II: The Philosophy of Perception and the Sciences of the Mind

Week 6. The Philosophy of Perception and Vision Science

Tuesday – In class exam (10% of total mark)

- Fish, W. (2021). 'The Philosophy of Perception and Vision Science' in *Philosophy of Perception: A Contemporary Introduction*, (2nd Edition), New York: Routledge.

Week 7. Is There a Perception-Cognition Border?

- Clarke, S. & Beck, J. (2023). 'Border Disputes: Recent Debates along the Perception-Cognition Border', in *Philosophy Compass*, 18 (8): 1-14.
- Burge, T. (2014). 'Perception: Where Mind Begins' in *Philosophy*, 89(3): 385-403.

Week 8. Is Perception Cognitively Penetrable?

- Macpherson, F. (2011). 'Cognitive Penetration of Color Experience: Rethinking the Issue in Light of an Indirect Mechanism', in *Philosophy & Phenomenological Research* 84 (1): 24-62.
- Firestone, C. & Scholl, B. (2016). 'Cognition does not affect perception: Evaluating the evidence for "top-down" effects' in *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*.
 - This is a target article, published with 30 or so short replies and a response to these – some of these might be helpful to look up if writing an essay on this topic.

Week 9. Color Vision

- Fish, W. (2021). 'Color, Color Vision, and Vision Science' in *Philosophy of Perception: A Contemporary Introduction*, (2nd Edition), New York: Routledge.
- Davies, W. (2020) 'Colour Relations in Black and White' in *The Harvard Review of Philosophy* 27: 87-100.
- Deroy, O. (2013). 'Synesthesia: An Experience of the Third Kind?' in R. Brown (Ed.) *Consciousness Inside and Out: Phenomenology, Neuroscience, and the Nature of Experience*, pp.395-407, Springer.

Week 10. The Laws of Appearance

- Pautz, A. (2020). 'The Puzzle of the laws of appearance' in *Philosophical Issues* 30 (1): 257-272.
- Sainsbury, M. (forthcoming). 'Visual Experience and The Laws of Appearance' in *Erkenntnis*.

Week 11. The Contents of Perception

- Macpherson, F. (2011). 'Introduction: The Admissible Contents of Perception' in K. Hawley & F. Macpherson (Eds.) *The Admissible Content of Perception*, Wiley Blackwell.
- Siegel, S. (2006). 'Which properties are represented in perception?' in T. Gendler & J. Hawthorne (Eds.) *Perceptual Experience*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Helton, G. (2018). 'Visually Perceiving the Intentions of Others', in *Philosophical Quarterly*, 68 (271): 243-64.

Three-page essays due before the start of class on Tuesday (25% of total mark)

Week 12. Perception and the Nonvisual Sense Modalities

- Fish, W. (2021). 'Perception and the Nonvisual Sense Modalities' in *Philosophy of Perception: A Contemporary Introduction*, (2nd Edition), New York: Routledge.
- Nudds, M. (2001). 'Experiencing the Production of Sounds' in *European Journal of Philosophy*, 9 (2): 210-229.

Week 13. Molyneux's Question

- Glenney, B. 'Molyneux's Question' in *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (<https://iep.utm.edu/molyneux/>)
- Eilan, N. (1993). 'Molyneux's question and the idea of an external world' in N. Eilan, R.A. McCarthy, & B. Brewer (Eds.) *Spatial representation: Problems in philosophy and Psychology*. Cambridge, Mass: Blackwell.

Week 14. Does Unconscious Perception Exist?

- Peters, M. et al. (2017) 'Does Unconscious Perception Really Exist?: Continuing the ASSC20 Debate', in *Neuroscience of Consciousness*, 1.
- Phillips, I. (2018) 'Unconscious Perception Reconsidered' in *Analytic Philosophy*, 59(4): 471-514.
- Quilty-Dunn, J. 'Unconscious perception and phenomenal coherence' in *Analysis*, 79(3): 461-468.

Week 15: Come discuss your final essays with me! Bring a detailed plan (*this is worth 15% of your mark*).

Final essays due December 13th (Worth 40% of your final mark)