

PHIL-UA 93, Fall 2015

## PHILOSOPHICAL APPLICATIONS OF COGNITIVE SCIENCE

# COURSE STRUCTURE

*Texts* All readings are available on NYU Classes

*Content* We will discuss the relevance of recent discoveries about the mind to philosophical questions about metaphysics and ethics. The questions include: What is causation? Is there a right way to “carve up” the world into categories? Why do we see the world as consisting of objects in places? Is there such a thing as objective right and wrong? Is there such a thing as free will?

*Evaluation* The coursework for the class consists of five papers. (There is no mid-term or final exam.) Each of these papers is either (a) a shorter 1800 to 2000 word paper on a topic you haven’t written on before, or (b) with my approval, a revision and extension, to between 3500 and 4000 words, of a previous short paper. So you’ll write at least three short papers, and then either zero, one, or two longer papers (with short papers making up the balance for five papers total).

- The due dates are: October 5th, October 26th, November 16th, December 7th, December 21st. The first four dates are marked on the list of readings; the last is the day the final exam would be given (if there were a final exam – but there isn’t).

*Contact Info* Office hours are Wednesdays 11:00 to 12:30, after class, and by appointment.

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## PHILOSOPHICAL APPLICATIONS OF COGNITIVE SCIENCE READINGS

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### *Introduction*

- Sep 2 First class: Overview & administration
- Sep 9 The mind's world
- ▷ Locke, J., *Essay*, Book I, chap. 2, 48–58
  - ▷ Kant, I., *Critique of Pure Reason*, 106–113
  - ▷ Whorf, B. L., "The relation of habitual thought and behavior to language", 134–152 (the rest is optional)
- Sep 14 The perception and metaphysics of color
- ▷ Lakoff, G., *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things*, 24–30
  - ▷ Mehler, J. and E. Dupoux, *What Infants Know*, 53–59
- Sep 16 No class

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### *Categories*

- Sep 21 The empiricist theory of concepts
- ▷ Locke, J., *Essay*, Book II chapters 2, 3, 12, 23:1–19, 24 (pp. 119–22, 163–6, 295–307)
- Sep 23 Concepts of natural kinds: Prototypes
- ▷ Smith, E. E., "Concepts and categorization", 3–19
  - ▷ Keil, F. C., *Concepts, Kinds and Conceptual Development*, 183–194, 307–309
- Sep 28 Concepts of natural kinds: Essentialism
- ▷ Strevens, M., "The essentialist aspect of naive theories", §§1–3
  - ▷ Lakoff, G., *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things*, 32–38 (optional)
  - ▷ Locke, J., *Essay*, Book III chapter 3:12–20 (pp. 414–20) (optional)
- Sep 30 Concepts of natural kinds: Minimalism
- ▷ Strevens, M., "The essentialist aspect of naive theories", §§4–5
- We will also discuss the fine art of paper-writing

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## Causation

- Oct 5 The philosophical psychology of causality: Empiricism ◁ Due date
- ▷ Locke, J., *Essay*, Book II, chap. 21 §1-3, (pp. 233-234)
  - ▷ Hume, D., *Enquiry*, section VII (pp. 60-79)
  - First paper due
- Oct 7 The philosophical psychology of causality: Kant
- ▷ Kant, I., *Critique of Pure Reason*, 222-223, 306-312
  - ▷ Optionally, look at Kant, I., *Critique of Pure Reason*, 172-174, 178-182 (readings concerning time, from "Space" reading)
- Oct 12 Fall Break - no class
- Oct 13 Are causal concepts innate?
- ▷ Leslie, A. M., "ToMM, ToBy, and agency: Core architecture and domain specificity"
  - ▷ Scholl, B. J. and P. D. Tremoulet, "Perceptual causality and animacy" (optional)

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## Causal Thinking

- Oct 14 Naive physics
- ▷ Clement, J., "A conceptual model discussed by Galileo and used intuitively by physics students"
  - ▷ McCloskey, M., "Naive theories of motion" (optional)
- Oct 19 Children's causal aptitude
- ▷ Schulz, L., T. Kushnir, and A. Gopnik, "Learning from doing: Intervention and causal inference"
  - ▷ Blaisdell, A. P., K. Sawa, K. J. Leising, and M. R. Waldmann, "Causal reasoning in rats" (optional)
- Oct 21 Why think causally?
- ▷ Strevens, M., "Why represent causal relations?", §§1, 4, 5

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## Ethics

- Oct 26 Are moral beliefs innate? ◁ Due date
- ▷ Premack, D. and A. J. Premack, "Moral belief: Form versus content", 149-161 (the rest is optional)
  - ▷ Brown, D. E., *Human Universals*, chap. 6, 130-141
  - Second paper due
- Oct 28 What does the science of morality tell us about morality?
- ▷ Joyce, R., *The Evolution of Morality*, 156-162, 179-190

- Nov 2 The evolution of distributive justice
- ▷ Trivers, R. L., "The evolution of reciprocal altruism", focusing on Introduction, "The model" intro, "Human reciprocal altruism" intro & §§4-5; "Psychological System" intro & §§1-5, 8-9 (i.e., 35-36, 45, 46-47, 47-50, 52-53).
  - ▷ Skyrms, B., *Evolution of the Social Contract*, chap. 1, 1-21
- Nov 4 Personality and morality
- ▷ Doris, J. M., "Persons, situations, and virtue ethics"
- Nov 9 Free will
- ▷ Wegner, D. M. and T. Wheatley, "Apparent mental causation: Sources of the experience of the will"
  - ▷ Stetson, C., X. Cui, P. R. Montague, and D. M. Eagleman, "Motor-sensory recalibration leads to an illusory reversal of action and sensation" (optional)
- Nov 11 Moral intuitions
- ▷ Sinnott-Armstrong, W., "Moral intuitionism meets empirical psychology", 339-358, 362-364 (i.e., skip all objections except the final two)

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## Objects

- Nov 16 Philosophical psychology of objects ◁ Due date
- ▷ Reread Locke, J., *Essay*, Book II, chap. 23, §1-19 (from "Categories" reading)
  - ▷ Quine, W. V. O., *The Pursuit of Truth*, §§1, 2, 4, 9, 11
  - Third paper due
- Nov 18 Objects and infants
- ▷ Spelke, E., "Principles of object perception"
- Nov 23 No class
- Nov 25 Thanksgiving break - no class

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## Space

- Nov 30 Philosophical psychology of space
- ▷ Locke, J., *Essay*, Book II, chap. 9, §7-10; chap. 13, §7-10 (pp. 145-147, 169-171)
  - ▷ Kant, I., *Critique of Pure Reason*, 172-184
- Dec 2 Early psychology of space
- ▷ Descartes, R., *The World and Other Writings*, 131-139
  - ▷ Poincaré, H., *Science and Method*, 93-116

Dec 7 Neuroscience of space

◁ Due date

- ▷ Stein, B. E. and M. A. Meredith, *The Merging of the Senses*, 87-98, 111-122
- ▷ Clark, A., "Visual experience and motor action: Are the bonds too tight?", 495-505
- Fourth paper due

Dec 9 Anthropology of space

- ▷ Levinson, S. C. and P. Brown, "Immanuel Kant among the Tenejapans: Anthropology as empirical philosophy"

Dec 14 Linguistics of space

- ▷ Lakoff, G., *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things*, 313-317
- ▷ Jackendoff, R. and B. Landau, "Spatial language and spatial cognition" 99-112, 118-123

No classes: Sep 16; Oct 12th replaced by Oct 13th (NYU Fall break);  
Nov 23; Nov 25th (Thanksgiving break)

Papers are due on Oct 5; Oct 26; Nov 16; Dec 7; Dec 21

## PHILOSOPHICAL APPLICATIONS OF COGNITIVE SCIENCE

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