

PHIL-UA 93, Fall 2021

PHILOSOPHICAL APPLICATIONS OF COGNITIVE SCIENCE

COURSE STRUCTURE

Texts All readings are available on the class Brightspace site

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 about before, or (b) with Soren’s 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, at 9.30 AM. The first four dates are marked on the list of readings; the last is the final day of the exam period.
- Papers will be submitted through the Brightspace site

Recitations The teaching assistant for the class, and the leader of the recitations, is Soren Schlassa.

The Thursday recitation meets in room 302, 5 Washington Place.

The Friday recitation meets in room 202, 194 Mercer St.

Schlassa Office hours are Fridays 11–12 and 2–3:30, and by appointment.
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Stevens Office hours are Tuesdays 11:00–12:30, after class, and by appointment.
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Moses Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities. The Moses Center website is www.nyu.edu/csd. Please contact the Moses Center for Student Accessibility (212-998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu) for further information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance.

Integrity Academic integrity means that the work you submit is original. Bringing answers into an examination or copying all or part of a paper straight from a book, the Internet, or a fellow student is a violation of this principle. But there are other forms of cheating or plagiarizing which are just as serious—for example, presenting an oral report drawn without attribution from other sources (oral or written); writing a sentence or paragraph which, despite being in different words, expresses someone else’s ideas without a reference to the source of the ideas; or submitting essentially the same paper in two different courses (unless both instructors have given their permission in advance). Receiving or giving help on a take-home paper, examination, or quiz is also cheating, unless expressly permitted by the instructor (as in collaborative projects).

PHILOSOPHICAL APPLICATIONS OF COGNITIVE SCIENCE

READINGS

Introduction

- Sep 2 First class: Overview & administration
- Sep 7 The mind's world
- ▷ Locke, *Essay*, Book I, chap. 2, 48–55 (§§1–15)
 - ▷ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 106–113
 - ▷ Whorf, “The relation of habitual thought and behavior to language”, 134–152 (the rest is optional)
- Sep 9 The perception and metaphysics of color
- ▷ Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things*, 24–30
 - ▷ Mehler and Dupoux, *What Infants Know*, 53–59

Categories

- Sep 14 The empiricist theory of concepts
- ▷ Locke, *Essay*, Book II chapters 2, 3, 12, 23:1–19, 24 (pp. 119–22, 163–6, 295–307)
- Sep 16 Concepts of natural kinds: Prototypes
- ▷ Smith, “Concepts and categorization”, 3–19
 - ▷ Keil, *Concepts, Kinds and Conceptual Development*, 183–194, 307–309
- Sep 21 Concepts of natural kinds: Essentialism
- ▷ Strevens, “The essentialist aspect of naive theories”, §§1–3
 - ▷ Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things*, 32–38 (optional)
 - ▷ Locke, *Essay*, Book III chapter 3:12–20 (pp. 414–20) (optional)
- Sep 23 Concepts of natural kinds: Minimalism
- ▷ Strevens, “The essentialist aspect of naive theories”, §§4–5

Causation

- Sep 28 The philosophical psychology of causality: Empiricism
- ▷ Locke, *Essay*, Book II, chap. 21 §1–3, (pp. 233–234)
 - ▷ Hume, *Enquiry*, section VII (pp. 60–69, 73–79) (that is, omit §§54–57)

- Sep 20 The philosophical psychology of causality: Kant
- ▷ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 222–223, 306–312
 - ▷ Optionally, look at Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 172–174, 178–182 (readings concerning time, from our “Space” reading)
- Oct 5 Are causal concepts innate? ◁ Due date
- ▷ Leslie, “ToMM, ToBy, and agency: Core architecture and domain specificity”
 - ▷ Scholl and Tremoulet, “Perceptual causality and animacy” (optional)
 - First paper due
- Oct 7 No class
- Oct 12 Legislative Monday – no class

Ethics

- Oct 14 The evolution of distributive justice
- ▷ Trivers, “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, *Evolution of the Social Contract*, chap. 1, 1–21
- Oct 19 What does the science of morality tell us about morality?
- ▷ Joyce, *The Evolution of Morality*, 156–162, 179–190
- Oct 21 Are moral beliefs innate?
- ▷ Premack and Premack, “Moral belief: Form versus content”, 149–161 (the rest is optional)
 - ▷ Brown, *Human Universals*, chap. 6, 130–141
 - ▷ Paul Bloom “Moral Babies”, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/09/magazine/09babies-t.html>
- Oct 26 Personality and morality ◁ Due date
- ▷ Doris, “Persons, situations, and virtue ethics”
 - Second paper due
- Oct 28 Free will
- ▷ Wegner and Wheatley, “Apparent mental causation: Sources of the experience of the will”
 - ▷ Stetson, Cui, Montague, and Eagleman, “Motor-sensory recalibration leads to an illusory reversal of action and sensation” (optional)
- Nov 2 Moral intuitions
- ▷ Sinnott-Armstrong, “Moral intuitionism meets empirical psychology”, 339–356, 362–364

Objects

- Nov 4 Philosophical psychology of objects
- ▷ Reread Locke, *Essay*, Book II, chap. 23, §1–6 (from “Categories” reading)
 - ▷ Quine, *The Pursuit of Truth*, §§1, 2, 4, 9, 11
- Nov 9 Objects and infants
- ▷ Spelke, “Principles of object perception”
- Nov 11 The unity of objects
- ▷ Hirsch, “A sense of unity”

Causal Thinking

- Nov 16 Naive physics ◁ Due date
- ▷ Clement, “A conceptual model discussed by Galileo and used intuitively by physics students”
 - ▷ McCloskey, “Naive theories of motion” (optional)
 - ▷ Kubricht, Holyoak, and Lu, “Intuitive physics: Current research and controversies” (optional)
 - Third paper due
- Nov 18 Children’s causal aptitude
- ▷ Schulz, Kushnir, and Gopnik, “Learning from doing: Intervention and causal inference”, pp. 1–3, 10–19, 23–28, 36 to end
 - ▷ Blaisdell, Sawa, Leising, and Waldmann, “Causal reasoning in rats” (optional)
- Nov 23 Why think causally?
- ▷ Strevens, “Why represent causal relations?”, §§1, 4, 5
- Nov 25 Thanksgiving break – no class

Space

- Nov 30 Philosophical psychology of space
- ▷ Locke, *Essay*, Book II, chap. 9, §7–10; chap. 13, §7–10 (pp. 145–147, 169–171)
 - ▷ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 172–178 (pp. 178–184 are optional)
- Dec 2 Early psychology of space
- ▷ Descartes, *The World and Other Writings*, 131–139 (optional)
 - ▷ Poincaré, *Science and Method*, 93–116
- Dec 7 Neuroscience of space ◁ Due date
- ▷ Stein and Meredith, *The Merging of the Senses*, 87–98, 111–122
 - ▷ Clark, “Visual experience and motor action: Are the bonds too tight?”, 495–505
 - Fourth paper due

Dec 9 Anthropology of space

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

Dec 14 Linguistics of space

- ▷ Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things*, 313-317
- ▷ Jackendoff and Landau, "Spatial language and spatial cognition" 99-103, 106-112, 118-123

No classes: Oct 7th; Oct 12th (legislative Monday); Nov 25th (Thanksgiving break)

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

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