

PHIL 360: Philosophical Psychology

Spring 2022 / TuTh 1:00–2:30 (101 Gest)

Instructor: Chuck Goldhaber

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Office Hours: Th 2:30–4:30, or by appt.

Office: Hall 009C

Course Description

Perception of the world around us makes up an enormous part of our inner lives. But what is the nature of this experience? How does it relate to other parts of our psychology, such as our thought, imagination, belief, aesthetic feelings, and a myriad of unconscious or sub-personal processes? What methods can we use to gain insight into these relations? In this course, we will tackle these questions in three stages.

First, we will canvass a variety of ways philosophers have characterized perception. These views have often been motivated by cases where we do not in fact perceive what we seem to, such as illusion and hallucination. Can we account for the ‘psychological presence’ of an oasis which turns out to be a mirage, while still holding on to the idea that we ‘directly’ see or hear or feel material objects? More generally, how can our experiences and thought be ‘about’ the world? We will compare the different answers given by sense-datum, intentional, and disjunctivist theories of perception.

Second, we will approach perception by viewing it as a kind of skill, which draws on and informs our other psychological capacities. These include our understanding (or faculty for concepts), imagination, feeling and attention (as in the experience of art), and action. We will give special attention to the enactive theory of perception, which highlights perception’s connection to action and embodiment.

Throughout the course, though especially in the third and final unit, we will compare and contrast different methods for the rigorous study of perception. How does the philosophical study of perception differ from the empirical study of it, e.g., in psychology, biology, cognitive science, or medicine? Are the kinds of study at odds with each other? Are they only tangential? Or can they benefit from fruitful interaction? Through considering these questions, students will gain insight into what it is we are trying to understand in studying our own perception or psychology.

Course Requirements

% of course grade

- Up to 60 pages per week of dense philosophical reading
- Regular participation in class discussion
- One [or two] 3–5 page papers on a selection of provided topics 40% [or 30% each]
- One 8–10 page final paper on a chosen topic 60% [or 40%]

Required Texts

- J.L. Austin. *Sense and Sensibilia*, ed. G.J. Warnock. 1962. Oxford: Clarendon Press. (ISBN: 978-0-19-500307-9)
- Noë, Alva. *Action in Perception*. 2004. Cambridge: MIT Press. (ISBN: 978-0-262-64063-3)
- All other required readings will be made available on Moodle

Recommended Further Readings

- Byrne, Alex and Heather Logue (eds.). *Disjunctivism: Contemporary Readings*. 2009. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Macpherson, Fiona and Dimitris Platchias (eds.). *Hallucination: Philosophy and Psychology*. 2013. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Noë, Alva and E. Thompson (eds.). *Vision and Mind: Selected Readings in the Philosophy of Perception*. 2002. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Some additional readings can be found on Moodle, and may be of use in exploring final paper topics.

Readings

In the schedule below, readings are listed underneath the dates by which they must be read. All readings are dense and tough. Make sure you budget enough time to read them carefully, and several times, if necessary.

Always bring the week's required reading to class. The recommended anthologies are all available digitally through the Haverford Library.

Participation

Regular verbal participation in group discussions is crucial for developing philosophical reasoning skills, which are very closely related to conversational and debate skills. If you are feeling shy in class, come to office hours, and let's start talking there. Consistent and thoughtful class participation will boost borderline final grades.

Papers

You must write at least one short paper (3–5 pages, 900–1500 words) and one long final paper (8–10 page, 2400–3000 words). You may choose to write a second short paper. But this is completely optional! Doing so will change the percentage of your course grade accounted for by each assignment, spreading out the “risk.”

The rationale behind this choice is that, as you start to do more advanced research, you'll often face a similar choice: Focus on sharpening your writing skills through more bite-sized projects or focus on familiarizing yourself with the literature and finding your niche within it. These are both valuable tasks, equally important for developing your own voice. So, in the context of this course, it's up to you to decide whether you'd like more practice writing philosophy papers before settling your own topic for the final paper, or whether you'd prefer to focus your time on exploring different possible topics.

The short papers are due 3/3 and 4/12 *by noon* in my mailbox in Hall 101. Each paper must address one of several provided topics concerning the course texts, unless you get my approval for your own topic at least a week before the deadline. Provided topics will be distributed 2/10 and 3/24. There are no provided topics for the final paper, which is due *via email* 5/7 by 5pm for seniors and 5/13 by 5pm for non-seniors.

All papers must be clear, concise, rigorous, and well argued. They must use quotes and citations when presenting the target philosophers' views or arguments. Each paper must evaluate these views and arguments through use of objections and replies. You can't just explain what someone else thinks. Your job is to use course readings as a springboard for articulating your own views, and to argue for them convincingly. For the final paper especially, there is a premium on your saying something novel and valuable. It may be helpful, though is certainly not required, to do research outside course readings.

Writing Resources

I am happy to discuss paper ideas and drafts in Office Hours. I encourage you to take advantage of the Writing Center. Info: <https://www.haverford.edu/writing-center>.

There will be an optional, *though highly recommended*, writing workshop and open discussion on Saturday, April 16. Please come prepared with three hard copies of a 200–500 word prospectus of your final paper. The prospectus should do six things: (i) succinctly state the question you will address, (ii) succinctly answer that question—i.e., state your thesis, (iii) briefly summarize the relevant reading(s), (iv) roughly outline your intended argument, (v) consider a possible objection to your argument, and (vi) give a bibliography. It's ok for this document to be rough or incomplete! But please note that the more polished the prospectus is, the more useful the workshop will be.

Late Policy

Late work will drop 2/3 of a letter grade per each 24 hours late (e.g., A– to B). Due to university policies, I cannot accept late final papers. Plan ahead and start early!

Academic Stressors, Resources on Campus, and Learning Differences

I am committed to partnering with you on your academic and intellectual journey. I also recognize that your ability to thrive academically can be impacted by your personal well-being and that stressors may impact you over the course of the semester. If the stressors

are academic, I welcome the opportunity to discuss and address those stressors with you in order to find solutions together. If you are experiencing challenges or questions related to emotional health, finances, physical health, relationships, learning strategies or differences, or other potential stressors, I hope you will consider reaching out to the many resources available on campus. These resources include CAPS (free and unlimited counseling is available), the Office of Academic Resources, Health Services, Professional Health Advocate, Religious and Spiritual Life, the Office of Multicultural Affairs, the GRASE Center, and the Dean's Office. Additional information can be found at <https://www.haverford.edu/deans-office-student-life/offices-resources>.

Additionally, Haverford College is committed to creating a learning environment that meets the needs of its diverse student body and providing equal access to students with a disability. If you have (or think you have) a learning difference or disability—including mental health, medical, or physical impairment—please contact the Office of Access and Disability Services (ADS) at hc-ads@haverford.edu. The Director will confidentially discuss the process to establish reasonable accommodations. It is never too late to request accommodations—our bodies and circumstances are continuously changing.

Students who have already been approved to receive academic accommodations and want to use their accommodations in this course should share their accommodation letter and make arrangements to meet with me as soon as possible to discuss how their accommodations will be implemented in this course. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and require advance notice in order to successfully implement.

If, at any point in the semester, a disability or personal circumstances affect your learning in this course or if there are ways in which the overall structure of the course and general classroom interactions could be adapted to facilitate full participation, please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

It is a state law in Pennsylvania that individuals must be given advance notice that they may be recorded. Therefore, any student who has a disability-related need to audio record this class must first be approved for this accommodation from the Director of Access and Disability Services and then must speak to me. Other class members need to be aware that this class may be recorded.

Prohibitions

Cell phones must be silenced during class. No eating is allowed in the classroom. Drinks are OK, when allowed by the College's current COVID-19 policies.

Academic Integrity

Any form of cheating, including plagiarism, will be reported to the Honor Council. You are responsible for knowing what counts as plagiarism or cheating. Please consult the Honor Code's webpage: <https://honorcouncil.haverford.edu/the-code/>.

To ensure a safe and constructive learning environment for all, please join me in the commitment to respect everyone's identities and rights, regardless of differences.

Schedule

Assignment deadlines

Jan 25 – Introduction

— Part I: Philosophical Theories of Perception —

Jan 27 – The origins of sense datum theory

- Selections from David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, §12: “Of the Academical or Sceptical Philosophy”
- A.J. Ayer, “The Argument from Illusion” (§1)

Feb 1 – Criticisms of the argument from illusion

- A.J. Ayer, “The Argument from Illusion” (§§2–3)
- G.E. Moore, “Visual Sense Data”
- J.L. Austin, *Sense and Sensibilia*, Lecture I

Feb 3 – Illusory words

- J.L. Austin, *Sense and Sensibilia*, Lectures II, III, and V

Feb 8 – What we perceive ‘immediately’

- Frank Jackson, “The Distinction between Mediate and Immediate Objects of Perception”

Feb 10 – How perception is ‘about’ things First paper topics assigned

- G.E.M. Anscombe, “The Intentionality of Sensation: A Grammatical Feature”

Feb 15 – The disjunctivist conception of perception

- John McDowell, “Criteria, Defeasibility, and Knowledge”

Feb 17 – The relational view of perception

- John Campbell, “The Relational View of Experience”

Feb 22 – Scientific study of hallucination

- Oliver Sacks, “Silent Multitudes: Charles Bonnet Syndrome”
- Dominic ffytche, “The Hallucinating Brain: Neurobiological Insights in the Nature of Hallucination”

Feb 24 – Perception without awareness?

- Larry Weiskrantz, “Blindsight in Hindsight”
- [Note: Class and OH will be held on Zoom]

— Part II: Perception as Skill —

Mar 1 – Does imagination play a role in perceiving?

- P.F. Strawson, “Perception and Imagination”
- [Note: I will hold Office Hours today at the normal time/place]

Mar 3 – What properties figure in perceptual awareness? First paper due

- Grace Helton, “Recent Issues in High Level Perception”
- [Note: Office Hours moved to Tuesday]

— Spring Break —

Mar 15 – [Got cancelled due to illness]

- Nothing!

Mar 17 – The mechanics and varieties of perceptual learning and skill

- Robert Goldstone and Lisa Byrge, “Perceptual Learning”
- Susanna Siegel, “Skill and Expertise in Perception”

Mar 22 – What makes experience of art aesthetic?

- Bence Nanay, “Aesthetic Attention”

Mar 24 – Smell and aesthetic development

- Ann-Sophie Barwich, “Up the Nose of the Beholder? Aesthetic Perception in Olfaction as a Decision-Making Process”

Mar 29 – Introducing enactivism

Second paper topics assigned

- Alva Noë, *Action in Perception*, Chs. 1 and 2: “The Enactive Approach to Perception: An Introduction” and “Pictures in the Mind”

Mar 31 – Enactivism about shape and color

- Alva Noë, *Action in Perception*, Ch. 3, §§1–5, 9; Ch. 4, §§1–5: Selections from “Enacting Content” and “Colors Enacted”

— Part III: Philosophy and the Empirical Study of Perception —

Apr 5 – An epistemological approach to perception

- Barry Stroud, “Seeing What Is So”

Apr 7 – Are philosophers’ theories of perception anti-scientific?

- Tyler Burge, “Disjunctivism and Perceptual Psychology” (selections)

(Read the body text, skipping §§I–II, VII. In other words, read pp. 1–3, 9–31. The rest is optional; you may find the Appendix section on McDowell, pp. 43–50, interesting.)

Apr 12 – Do philosophers & scientists study the same thing? Second paper due

- Charles Goldhaber, “Does Perceptual Psychology Rule Out Disjunctivism in the Theory of Perception?”

Apr 14 – Can perceptual science make sense of perceptual intentionality?

- Kathleen Akins, “Of Sensory Systems and the ‘Aboutness’ of Mental States”

Sat., Apr 16 – Optional: Open discussion and writing workshop

- Bring three hard copies of your prospectus for the final paper!

[Note: In Gest 101, 1-4pm]

Apr 19 – Can our first-personal perspective inform AI research?

- Anthony Beavers, “Phenomenology and Artificial Intelligence”

[Note: Last in-person OH today, 11-12 and 2:30-3:30]

Apr 21 – Guest Q&A with Thomas Land: How perceptions give us reasons

- Thomas Land, “Perception and the Concept of an Object”

[Note: Class will be held on Zoom, OH moved Tues this week!]

Apr 26 – Guest Q&A with Alessandra Buccella: Can machines experience?

- Alessandra Buccella and Alison Springle, “AI, What’s Phenomenology Got to Do with It?”

[Note: Class will be held on Zoom 1-2; 12:45-1 is optional!]

Apr 28 – Extended Office Hours

- No new reading

[Note: Office Hours will be held on Zoom 1-5pm]

*** Senior final papers due by May 7, 5pm via email ***

*** Non-senior final papers due by May 13, 5pm via email ***