

PHL 515: Selected Topics in Philosophy of Mind: Perceptual Experience
Tuesdays 6:00 – 8:40 pm

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Course Description:

This course will investigate the philosophical nature of consciousness, with a focus on the topic of perceptual experience. We will seek an understanding of what is involved in perceptual experience keeping in the background the question of whether a physicalistic theory of the phenomenon is possible, and if not, what the obstacles are. We will begin by considering the optimistic view that Daniel Dennett has developed. We will then consider several other mainstream views on the topic of perceptual experience. In this section of the course, we will also consider the question of whether perceptual experience can be understood purely in terms of its representational properties, or whether there is some nonrepresentational, qualitative residue to our experiences that perhaps cannot be explained within a physicalist framework. Finally, we will consider an important rival to the view that perceptual experience is to be understood representationally at all.

Required Texts:

Daniel Dennett, *Consciousness Explained*, Back Bay Books, 1991.
Tamar Szabo Gendler and John Hawthorne, eds., *Perceptual Experience*, Oxford University Press, 2006.
Alva Noë, *Action in Perception*, MIT Press, 2004.

Assessment

Assessment will be on the basis of short (2-3 page) weekly summaries, and two longer (12-15 page) papers. From time to time, students may be asked to do presentations on the material, include presentations on the main ideas of their final term papers in the final week of class.

Weeklies: Students registered in the course are required to turn in 2-3 page summaries of every chapter and article assigned. These are due by email at 9am on the day of the class in which that chapter or article is to be discussed. Papers will under no circumstances be accepted late. Students may miss 2 over the course of the semester without affecting their grade in the course. These papers are meant to be merely expository and to carefully outline the author's main points and arguments.

Paper Guidelines: Students will be asked to write two longer (12-15 page) papers as well. The first will be due Tuesday, October 17. This will be a critique of some important

aspect of *Consciousness Explained*. The second will be on any topic covered in the course after Dennett and will be due Tuesday, December 19. Papers should be submitted at any time on or before the due date by email. Papers will be docked one third of a letter grade for every 24 hours they are late. I will be happy to look at any rough drafts and encourage students to come discuss their ideas with me before writing.

Course Schedule:

September 5: Introduction

September 12: Dennett, Part I, pp. 21-98

September 19: Dennett, Part II, pp. 101-170

September 26: Dennett, Part III, pp. 321-411

October 3: Ned Block, "Mental Paint"; Alex Byrne, "Intentionalism Defended"

October 10: John McDowell, *Mind and World* Chapter 3; Christopher Peacocke "Nonconceptual Content Defended"; Richard Heck "Nonconceptual Content and the 'Space of Reasons'"

October 17: David Chalmers, "Perception and the Fall from Eden"

October 24: Fred Dretske, "Perception without Awareness"

October 31: Sydney Shoemaker, "On the Way Things Appear"

November 7: Susanna Siegel, "Which Properties are Represented in Perception?"

November 14: Michael Tye, "Nonconceptual Content, Richness, and Fineness of Grain"

November 21: Noë, Chapter 1,2

November 28: Noë, Chapters 3,4

December 5: Noë, Chapters 5-7

December 12: Paper Presentations