

PHIL 451/551
Advanced Epistemology/Topics in Epistemology:
Mind and World
TWF 10:30 – 11:20

Instructor: Dr. Thomas Land

Office: CLE B 331

Office Hours: Wed 3:00-4:00 and by appt.

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Course Description

This course focuses on a strand in recent epistemology and philosophy of mind that seeks to develop various Kantian themes. Central to this strand is the idea that rational capacities (such as the capacity to know or the capacity to do something for a reason) are subject to normative assessment in a distinctive way and are for this reason *sui generis* with regard to our understanding of other aspects of the world – an idea that is sometimes expressed in terms of the image of a “logical space of reasons” in which such capacities belong. This idea has important implications for how we should conceptualize the relation between mind and world, both in general and, in particular, for the shape this relation takes in perception. We will explore these implications by focusing on John McDowell’s account of perception (as laid out in his 1996 *Mind and World* and subsequent work) and considering a number of objections to, and developments of, it. Topics to be discussed include the so-called Myth of the Given, the character and content of perceptual experience, the epistemology of perception, theories of justification, and the question what it is to believe something for a reason. Students can expect to acquire familiarity with important recent work in the philosophy of perception and deepen their knowledge of the aforementioned topics.

Course Website

This course has an associated website on UVic’s *Brightspace* tool. This will be used for assignments, communication, discussion, some of the readings, and to make available additional materials. To access your customized *Brightspace* page, sign in to UVic and click on *Online Tools*. You should see *Brightspace* as an option. If you are unable to access the website, please contact me.

Texts

There are two required books for this course, which are available at the UVic Bookstore:

- Willem de Vries and Timm Triplett, *Knowledge, Mind and the Given: Reading Wilfrid Sellars’s “Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind,”* Hackett Publishers, 2000 [= KMG]
- John McDowell, *Mind and World. With a New Introduction,* Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1996

All other readings will be made available via *Brightspace*.

Course Format

This course will be taught as a *synchronous online course*. This means that, while there will be no in-person classroom meetings, the class will meet virtually at the scheduled times. These meetings will be a mix of lecture and discussion. We will try as much as possible to recreate the atmosphere of a seminar in the virtual setting. For this reason, regular attendance and active participation are essential.

Evaluation

There are four requirements for this course, which are as follows:

<i>Assignment</i>	<i>Due Date</i>	<i>Weight</i>
9 Weekly Seminar Preps	Mondays at 11:59pm	15%
Class Participation	N/A	10%
Midterm paper	October 26 at 11:59pm	25%
Final Paper	December 19 at 11:59pm	50%

Weekly Seminar Prep

Formulate a question, offer a summary, or raise an objection in response to the week's reading. The function of this assignment is to aid your understanding and facilitate class discussion. It should be between 150 and 300 words in length. You need to show that you are engaging with the reading, so perfunctory questions (e.g. 'what's the argument on p. 99?', 'I don't understand such-and-such') do not count. Instead, if you want to write about a point you don't understand, you need to do the following: say what you *do* understand and then articulate what is puzzling, and why.

Your weekly seminar prep is due on Monday night (midnight) of the week for which you are submitting it and is graded pass/fail. You **must** hand in 9 weekly preps. week. I do not provide marks or comments on this assignment.

Class Participation

You are encouraged to participate actively in class discussion, both in Zoom sessions and on discussion boards. This includes asking questions. Both quantity and quality of participation will be taken into consideration.

Midterm Paper

The midterm is a take-home exam on topics assigned by me. You will be asked to answer 2-3 questions. The total assignment will be up to 1200-1600 words in length.

Final Paper

You need to write a final paper on a topic relating to the course content.

BA students (PHIL 451): Write a paper of 3000-3500 words. I will suggest topics, but you are encouraged to write on a topic of your own design. If you choose the latter route, you must discuss your topic with me ahead of time and do so **no later than December 1**.

MA students (PHIL 551): Write a paper of 4500-5000 words on a topic of your own design. Ask me for suggestions if you are finding it difficult to come up with a topic. You must discuss your topic with me **no later than December 1**.

Course Schedule

Week	Date	Reading
1	Sep 9, 11	Introduction H.H. Price, "The Given"
<i>I. The Myth of the Given</i>		
2	Sep 15, 16, 18	KMG, Introduction Sellars, "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind," [= EPM], §§1-7, 10-23 KMG commentary on these sections
3	Sep 22, 23, 25	EPM, §§24-44 KMG commentary on these sections
4	Sep 29, 30, Oct 2	EPM, §§45-63 KMG commentary on these sections
<i>II. McDowell's Kantian Theory of Perceptual Experience</i>		
5	Oct 6, 7, 9	<i>Mind and World</i> , Lectures I and II, Afterword Part I
6	Oct 13, 14, 16	<i>Mind and World</i> , Lectures III and IV, Afterword Part II
7	Oct 20, 21, 23	<i>Mind and World</i> , Lectures V and VI, Afterword Part IV
<i>III. Burge's Objection from Over-Intellectualization</i>		
8	Oct 27, 28, 30	Tyler Burge, "Perceptual Entitlement" John McDowell, "Conceptual Capacities in Perception"
<i>IV. Brewer's Objection from the Immediacy of Experience</i>		
9	Nov 3, 4, 6	Bill Brewer, "Perception and Content" John McDowell, "Avoiding the Myth"
Reading Break – no class on Nov 10 and 11		
<i>V. Disjunctivism about Perceptual Experience</i>		
10	Nov 13, 17, 18, 20	John McDowell, "Perceptual Experience: Both Relational and Contentful" Ram Neta, "In Defense of Disjunctivism"
<i>VI. Experience and Reasons</i>		
11	Nov 24, 25, 27	Matthew Boyle, "Making Up Your Mind and the Activity of Reason"

		Ram Neta, “Mature Human Knowledge as a Standing in the Space of Reasons”
12	Dec 1, 2, 4	Matthew Boyle, “Additive Theories of Rationality: A Critique”
	Dec 12	TBD

Attendance and Participation

This is an advanced class in philosophy. It is expected that students come to class prepared and ready to discuss the assigned material. Active participation in class discussion is strongly encouraged and essential to the success of this course. The virtual setting will make this feel slightly different from in-person classes, but productive philosophical discussion via e.g. Zoom is perfectly feasible, and we will hopefully all get used to it soon.

Office Hours

I hold regular office hours for one-on-one or small group meetings with students. I encourage you to make use of these. I especially encourage you to come to office hours if there is something you don’t understand or if you are struggling in the course. If this is the case, don’t wait! The sooner you bring up such issues, the better I am usually able to help you. Office hours will be held via Zoom or Brightspace chat.

Announcements and Email

My primary mode of communication with you will be via the Announcements function on the course’s Brightspace site. Please make sure that you check announcements regularly. The easiest way to do this is to enable Brightspace to notify you about new announcements via text or email (click on your name in the top right-hand corner and go to ‘Notifications’). I will also sometimes communicate important information to you via email. Emails will be sent to the address listed in UVic’s system as your contact information. It is your responsibility to make sure that this information is current and to check this email address at least once a day.

If you contact me via email, I will make every effort to respond in a timely manner, which generally will be within 48 hours (longer on weekends). To make sure your email does not end up in my spam folder, please put the course number in the subject line (e.g. PHIL 451) and use your UVic email address.

If you have a question about assignments, due dates, or other course policies, the syllabus should be your first resource. *I will not respond to any emails that ask questions which are answered in the syllabus.* Your second resource should be the course’s discussion board, which is accessible through the course website. Students are encouraged to use this feature to discuss questions about course mechanics as well as course content. I periodically monitor the discussion board, to make sure that all information is correct.

Intellectual property of materials on *D2L Brightspace*

Please note that all assignments for this course and all materials posted to the *D2L Brightspace* are the intellectual property of myself and the University of Victoria. Do not circulate this material or post it to note-sharing sites without my permission. Posting course materials to note-sharing sites or otherwise circulating course materials without the permission of your instructor violates the [Policy on Academic Integrity](#). Any evidence you are circulating materials without permission will be referred to the Chair of the Philosophy Department for investigation.

Online Student Conduct

The University of Victoria is committed to promoting critical academic discourse while providing a respectful and supportive learning environment. All members of the university community have the right to this experience, and the responsibility to help create, such an environment. The University will not tolerate racism, sexualized violence, or any form of discrimination, bullying or harassment.

Please be advised that by logging into UVic's learning systems and interacting with online resources you are engaging in a university activity.

All interactions within this environment are subject to the university expectations and policies. Any concerns about student conduct, may be reviewed and responded to in accordance with the appropriate university policy.

To report concerns about online student conduct: onlineconduct@uvic.ca

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is intellectual honesty and responsibility for academic work that you submit individually or as a member of a group. It involves commitment to the values of honesty, trust and responsibility. It is expected that students will respect these ethical values in all activities related to learning, teaching, research and service. Therefore, plagiarism and other acts against academic integrity are serious academic offences.

The responsibility of the institution: Instructors and academic units have the responsibility to ensure that standards of academic honesty are met. By doing so, the institution recognizes students for their hard work and assures them that other students do not have an unfair advantage through cheating on essays, exams, and projects.

The responsibility of the student: Plagiarism sometimes occurs due to a misunderstanding regarding the rules of academic integrity, but it is the responsibility of the student to know them. If you are unsure about the standards for citations or for referencing your sources, ask your instructor. Depending on the severity of the case, penalties include a warning, a failing grade, a record on the student's transcript, or a suspension. It is your responsibility to understand the University's policy on academic integrity, which can be found in the undergraduate calendar.

Please see [UVic's \(revised\) academic integrity policy](#) for further details.

Significant Dates (<https://www.uvic.ca/calendar/dates/>)

- Tue., Sept. 22: last day for 100% reduction of fees
- Fri., Sept. 25: last day to for adding first-term courses
- Tues., Oct. 13: last day for 50% reduction of tuition fees. 100% of tuition fees will be assessed for courses dropped after this date.
- Sat., Oct. 31: last day for withdrawing from second-term courses without penalty of failure

Accessibility

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. If you need an academic accommodation you will need to register with the Centre for Accessible Learning (<https://www.uvic.ca/services/cal>). Please do so as early as possible. Please feel free to go directly to the Centre for Accessible Learning or to approach me.

Grading Scheme

Percentage	Letter Grade	Grade Point	Grade Definition
90-100	A+	9	An A+, A, or A- is earned by work which is technically superior , shows mastery of the subject matter, and in the case of an A+ offers original insight and/or goes beyond course expectations. Normally achieved by a minority of students.
85-89	A	8	
80-84	A-	7	
77-79	B+	6	A B+, B, or B- is earned by work that indicates a good comprehension of the course material, a good command of the skills needed to work with the course material, and the student's full engagement with the course requirements and activities. A B+ represents a more complex understanding and/or application of the course material. Normally achieved by the largest number of students.
73-76	B	5	
70-72	B-	4	
65-69	C+	3	A C+ or C is earned by work that indicates an adequate comprehension of the course material and the skills needed to work with the course material and that indicates the student has met the basic requirements for completing assigned work and/or participating in class activities
60-64	C	2	
50-59	D	1	A D is earned by work that indicates minimal command of the course materials and/or minimal participation in class activities that is worthy of course credit toward the degree.
0-49	F	0	F is earned by work which, after the completion of course requirements, is inadequate and unworthy of course credit towards the degree.

Interpretation of these grade definitions is at the discretion of the instructor. If you receive a grade that you believe is unfair, please begin by discussing the matter with the instructor (or TA) in a respectful, open-minded manner. If you still believe the grade you received is unfair you can appeal the matter to the chair of the department.

For additional information regarding grades, please see the most recent edition of the UVic [Undergraduate Calendar](#). All evaluations of tests and assignments will be calculated according to percentage scores. Letter grades and grade point scores are listed purely for reference.

Counselling Services

Your mental health is as important as your physical health. During the semester, you might feel overwhelmed, lonely, or stressed about your academic performance. You might experience a personal or family tragedy. The University provides FREE counselling services. (Check www.uvic.ca/services/counselling/ for more information).

Course Experience Surveys (CES)

I value your feedback on this course. Towards the end of term, as in all other courses at UVic, you will have the opportunity to complete an anonymous survey regarding your learning experience (CES). The survey is vital to providing feedback to me regarding the course and my teaching, as well as to help the department improve the overall program for students in the future. The survey is accessed via MyPage and can be done on your laptop, tablet, or mobile device. I will remind you and provide you with more detailed information nearer the time but please be thinking about this important activity during the course.