

PHILOSOPHY 358 (A01): THEORY OF PERCEPTION
SPRING 2020 [22342]

Class times

Monday & Thursday, 10:00-11:20, ECS (Engineering Comp Sci) 104

Professor

Patrick Rysiew

Office Hours: Thursday 11:30-12:00, Friday 1:00-2:20, or by appointment; Clearihue B321

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Texts

- 1) *Philosophy of Perception: A Contemporary Introduction*, William Fish (Routledge 2010), ISBN 978-0415999120.
- 2) Several additional readings will be made available via the course's web page (CourseSpaces). Students are responsible for acquiring copies of these.

Course Description

Perception is among our principal sources of information about the world. It's something we tend to take for granted: we do it all the time, and generally do it very well, without having to think about it. This course is designed to introduce students to issues and questions that arise when we step back and try to understand perception, and to the major philosophical positions that have been staked out in trying to do so. Some of the issues addressed are epistemological – having to do with what entitles us to form the perceptual beliefs that we do. Others are psychological – having to do with how perception works, with how we are to conceive of perceptual states and processes, and so on. There are also important connections between philosophical issues and theories and developments and theories in the various cognitive sciences. Towards the end of the course we will consider some of these as well.

Expectations

Students are expected to come to class having read the assigned readings, and prepared to talk and ask questions about the material. Students who miss a class are responsible for any material covered therein, as well as for finding out what announcements, if any, were made.

Three quick tips for doing well in the course

1. Come to class (when you must miss, let the instructor know ahead of time; afterwards, talk to a class-mate about what happened – get their lecture notes, visit the instructor in office hours)
2. Do the readings ahead of time, and read 'actively' – pay attention to what you're reading, ask yourself what point(s) the author(s) is trying to make, why this matters, what questions you'd like to ask the author, and so on
3. If you're having trouble with any of the course material, speak to the instructor right away

Evaluation

Students' grades will be based on:

- **Midterm exam (30%).** Students will be given 4 study questions calling for essay-style

responses; 3 of these will appear on the exam, and students will have to write a response to two of them.

- **Paper (35%).** Approx. 8 pp. long; some topics will be suggested; students may write on a topic of their own design, but only if they obtain the instructor’s permission in advance.
- Several short **in-class quizzes (5%).** T/F, multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank, short answer, etc.), based on the readings; the quizzes will not, as a rule, be announced ahead of time.
- **Final exam (30%).** The exam will be cumulative; it will be a combination of questions like those on the quizzes, short answer questions, and a choice of longer essay-style questions.

Beyond the student’s having adequately addressed the topic question(s) on which he/she writes, evaluation of the midterm responses, papers, and any essay question(s) appearing on the final exam will be based on: evidence of comprehension of the materials and issues addressed; evidence of original and critical thought with regard to that material; the extent to which the student stakes out a position and provides good reasons and arguments for it; the extent to which the student communicates his/her ideas clearly (using complete and grammatical sentences, correct terms, a clear essay structure, and so on). For the short essays, *the use of outside materials (i.e., any readings not assigned for the course) is permitted only if you have received the instructor’s permission ahead of time.* Any materials used for the essays (i.e., any course readings) must be properly cited in the standard way.

Without exception, late papers unaccompanied by a legitimate documented excuse will be penalized at the rate of 5% per day or portion thereof, starting as soon as the due date and time have passed. Should an emergency arise, let the instructor know – ahead of time, if possible. An unexcused absence without a documented excuse on the day of a quiz will result in a score of zero.

The standard University grading scheme will be used. Here is an excerpt from it (the full version is here: <https://web.uvic.ca/calendar2018-05/undergrad/info/regulations/grading.html>):

Passing Grades	Grade Point Value	Percentage	Description
A+	9	90 – 100	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.
A	8	85 – 89	
A-	7	80 – 84	
B+	6	77 – 79	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.
B	5	73 – 76	
B-	4	70 – 72	
C+	3	65 – 69	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
C	2	60 – 64	

			student has met the basic requirements for completing assigned work and/or participating in class activities.
D	1	50 – 59	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.

Plagiarism and other forms of cheating will not be tolerated. It is each student’s responsibility to know the University’s regulations in this regard. The Policy on Academic Integrity is published in the University Calendar.¹ Other resources concerning cheating and plagiarism include the Libraries’ plagiarism guide,² and the Learning and Teaching Centre’s information for students.³

Schedule of Topics and Readings

What follows is *provisional* and *subject to revision* at the instructor’s discretion. Any changes to the schedule will be announced in class. As a default, readings for a given week are listed in the order in which you should read them. ‘C’ designates a reading available via the CourseSpaces page.

Week 1 (Jan. 6, 9): Introduction; Getting Started

- Fish, Ch. 1
- Gregory, “Perceptions as Hypotheses” (C)

Week 2 (Jan. 13, 16): Sense-Datum theories

- Fish, Ch. 2
- Ayer, “The Argument from Illusion” (C)
- Strawson, “Perception and Its Objects” (C)

Week 3 (Jan. 20, 23): Adverbial theories

- Fish, Ch. 3
- Tye, “The Adverbial Theory: A Defense of Sellars against Jackson” (C)

Week 4 (Jan. 27, 30): Belief-acquisition (or doxastic) theories

- Fish, Ch. 4
- excerpt from Armstrong’s *A Materialist Theory of the Mind* (C)

Week 5 (Feb. 3, 6): Intentional (including ‘representationalist’) theories

- Fish, Ch. 5
- Dretske, “Experience as Representation” (C)

**Midterm study questions distributed: Thursday, February 7th*

¹ <https://web.uvic.ca/calendar2018-05/undergrad/info/regulations/academic-integrity.html>.

² <https://www.uvic.ca/library/research/citation/plagiarism/index.php>.

³ <https://www.uvic.ca/learningandteaching/students/resources/expectations/index.php>.

Week 6 (Feb. 10, 13): Continued, Catch-up

**Midterm exam: Thursday, February 13th*

****Feb. 17-21: No classes – Reading break****

Week 7 (Feb. 24, 27): Disjunctivism

- Fish Ch. 6
- Byrne and Logue, “Either/Or” (C)

**Suggested paper topics distributed: Thursday, February 28th*

Week 8 (March 2, 5): Causal theories

- Fish, Ch. 7
- Lewis, “Veridical Hallucination and Prosthetic Vision” (C)

Week 9 (March 9, 12): Non-visual perception

- Fish, Ch. 9
- Reid, selections (C)
 - *optional: “Molyneux’s Problem”, Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/molyneux-problem/>*
 - *optional: Grice, “Some Remarks about the Senses” (C)*

**Deadline for approval, if you wish to do your own paper topic rather than one of the suggested topics: Monday March 9th*

Week 10 (March 16, 19): Perception and Cognitive Science

- Fish, Ch. 8
- Noë & O’Regan, “On the Brain-Basis of Visual Consciousness” (C)
 - *optional: Siegel, “Which Properties are Represented in Perception?” (C)*
 - *optional: Milner & Goodale, “The Visual Brain in Action” (C)*

Week 11 (March 23, 26): Action and Embodiment

- Merleau-Ponty, “Selections from *Phenomenology of Perception*” (C)
- Ballard, “On the Function of Visual Representation” (C)
 - *optional: Noë, “Experience without the head” (C)*

**Paper due: Thursday, March 26th*

Week 12 (March 30, April 2): Continued, Catch-up; Review

**Final Exam:* The Term 2 exam period runs April 6-24. The date, time, and location of the final exam will be set by the University as the end of term approaches.

Some important administrative dates:⁴

- Sun., Jan. 19: last day for 100% reduction of fees
- Wed., Jan. 22: last day to for adding first-term courses
- Sun., Feb. 9: last day for 50% reduction of tuition fees. 100% of tuition fees will be assessed for courses dropped after this date
- Sat., Feb. 29: last day for withdrawing from second-term courses without penalty of failure

⁴ <https://web.uvic.ca/calendar2019-05/general/dates.html>.