

Phil 129: Philosophy of Psychology

UCLA Summer 2022 (A Session)

TR 10:45am-12:50pm in Royce 156

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Course Description

We will investigate *mental representations*. Mental representations are used by the mind to carry information about the world. When I visually perceive my coffee cup on the table in front of me, for example, I form a representation of this state of the world. Mental representations are simply little bits of information in the mind. So far, so good.

But, complexities quickly arise. We will tackle three areas of complexity. First, we will ask why and how mental representations are distinguished from other mental phenomenon, such as sensation and consciousness. Second, we will investigate different mental representational systems. We will focus on representations that are used in thought, perception, and navigation and ask what characterizes these forms of representation. Lastly, we will study how the systems that produce these different mental representations relate to each other. Are these systems isolated from one another? Or do they influence each other, and if so, how?

Course Goals

Beyond giving an overview of how philosophers conceive of the workings of the mind, the lectures and assignments in this course are structured so as to *promote philosophical discussion* and *build writing skills*.

Philosophy is not something to be consumed – it is an activity. We will work to realize this fact by approaching philosophical ideas and arguments through discourse. Each class period will have time devoted to discussion, so that students can engage with the material as active learners. We will repeatedly step back and formulate questions about the material and in so doing, learn to appreciate philosophy as a discipline in which the questions deserve as much attention (if not more) than the answers.

We will also learn how to transfer these discussions into philosophical prose through a series of writing exercises and assignments. Our focus will be on how to promote clarity, precision, and concision. Before each paper assignment, guidelines will be distributed that target specific elements of philosophical writing. The ideas discussed in these guidelines will increase in sophistication as students progress throughout the term.

Course Materials

- All materials will be posted to the course website. We will not use a textbook.

Course Policies

Discussion Expectations:

- In order to facilitate worthwhile philosophical discussion, it will be important that everyone abide by the **Principle of Charity** (POC):

Interpret a speaker's statements in the most persuasive way possible, so as to render those statements rational and worthy of philosophical engagement.

- In other words, give everyone you interact with the benefit of the doubt. A student following the POC, for example, would not speak over their fellow students or be outright dismissive of the points they're intending to convey. The primary aim of the POC is to ensure a respectful, worthwhile, and collaborative intellectual environment. All students will be expected to act in ways that further these aims.

Participation:

- Participation is **highly** encouraged (and part of your grade)! Philosophy classes work best when everyone talks. So, pose questions to the class, attempt to answer questions from one another, and generally engage with your fellow classmates. This applies both in lecture and in discussion section with your TA.
- Come to office hours! Coming to office hours – both the instructor's and the TA's – will count as a form of participation. Moreover, office hours can be an immensely helpful way to digest and work with the material.

Attendance and Lecture Recordings:

- Under normal circumstances, you are expected to be an avid lecture attendee and participant. But if you are unable to attend lecture, audio recordings of the lectures will be available as a back-up. They will be posted to the course website after each class.
- Whether discussion sections are recorded is left to the discretion of your TA.

Late Policy:

- Work that is turned in late will be docked 1/3 of a letter grade for each 48-hour period late. For example, a B will be lowered to a B- if the assignment is within 48 hours late.

Academic Honesty:

- Students are expected to know and to follow the University's guidelines for academic honesty. Academic misconduct can occur in a variety of ways, including (but not limited to) cheating, fabrication, and plagiarism. Any suspected violation of university policy regarding academic conduct will be reported directly to the Office of the Dean of Students.

- When in doubt about whether some academic practice is acceptable, ask the instructor or TA for assistance. Always err on the side of avoiding academic misconduct.
- Below are links to UCLA's policies on academic and intellectual integrity:
<https://www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu/studentconductcode>
<https://www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu/Academic-Integrity>

Accessibility & Accommodations:

- Any students seeking disability services please register with the CAE as soon as possible. If you are already registered and require assistance for the quarter, please release your accommodation letters by the end of week one.
- Here is a link to the University's Center for Accessible Education (CAE): <http://www.cae.ucla.edu/>
- More generally, if you are experiencing difficulty (health-related, financial, other), feel free to reach out to the instructor or your TA. We will try our best to figure out how we can best navigate the course under the circumstances.

Assignments & Grading

Assignments:

- **Reading comprehension quizzes:** Each week, there will be one short reading comprehension quiz during one of the two lectures. You will not know in advance which lecture will have the quiz (although if there's no quiz in the first lecture of the week, you'll know it's coming...). These quizzes will be extremely easy if you have done the readings and will be graded pass/fail. The idea is that these quizzes will encourage you both to stay on track with the reading schedule and to attend lecture. Your lowest quiz grade will be dropped.
- **Papers:** There will be three papers. These will grow in length as we move through the term. The first will be 1-2 pages, the second will be 2-3 pages, and the third will be 4-5 pages. Prompts and instructions for these papers will be released at least one week in advance of the deadline. Papers will be graded anonymously.

Grade Breakdown:

- Section participation (10%)
- Reading comprehension quizzes (10% - each quiz is worth 2%)
- First paper (15%)
- Second paper (25%)
- Third paper (40%)

Tentative Schedule

Please note that this schedule is subject to change. Consult the Modules page of course website for the most up-to-date information.

~ UNIT ONE: What is Representation? ~

• **Week One**

- Lecture One: *Introduction and Overview*
 - * José Luis Bermúdez: "What is the Philosophy of Psychology?" *Philosophy of Psychology: a contemporary introduction* (2005)
 - * Jerry Fodor: "Preface," *The Language of Thought* (1975)
- Lecture Two: *What Representations Are and Why They're Mysterious*
 - * Shimon Edelman: "Computing Minds," *Computing the Mind* (2008) (pp. 13-25)
 - * Kathleen Akins: "Of Sensory Systems and the 'Aboutness' of Mental States" (1996) (Skip Section Three)

• **Week Two**

- Lecture One: *Distinguishing Representation from Sensation and Consciousness*
 - * Tyler Burge: "Perception: Where Mind Begins" (2014)
 - * José Luis Bermúdez: "Morgan's Canon and Psychological Explanations," *Thinking without Words* (2007)
 - * David Robson: "Blindsight: the Strangest Form of Consciousness," BBC (2015)

~ UNIT TWO: Examining Representational Systems and Forms ~

- Lecture Two: *Perceptual Representations*
 - * No new reading.
 - * Watch: "[Ames room](#)," Youtube (2014)
 - * Watch: "[Ramachandran - Ames room illusion explained](#)," Youtube (2008)

Friday, July 1st @ 11:59pm: Paper One Due

• **Week Three**

- Lecture One: *Representations in Conceptual Thought*
 - * Jerry Fodor: Excerpts from *The Language of Thought* (1975)
 - * Jerry Fodor: Excerpts from *Psychosemantics* (1987)
- Lecture Two: *Representations in Conceptual Thought cont.*
 - * Susan Schneider: "The Language of Thought," *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy of Psychology* (2019)

• **Week Four**

- Lecture One: *Cognitive Maps*
 - * Tsoar et al.: "Large-scale Navigational Map in a Mammal" (2011)
 - * Michael Rescorla: "Chryssipus's Dog as a Case Study in Non-Linguistic Cognition" (2009)

- Lecture Two: *A Case Study: Baboon Representations*
 - * Elisabeth Camp: "A Baboon Language of Thought?" (2009)

Friday, July 15th @ 11:59pm: Paper Two Due

~ UNIT THREE: Relating Representational Systems ~

- **Week Five**

- Lecture One: *Modularity*
 - * Philip Robbins: "Modularity of Mind," SEP (2017)
 - * Jerry Fodor: "Observation Reconsidered" (1984)
 - * Lily Dayton: "First person: One Singular Sensation," LA Times (2012)
- Lecture Two: *Cognitive Penetration*
 - * Nicholas Silins: "Cognitive Penetration and the Epistemology of Perception" (2016)
 - * Fiona Macpherson: "Cognitive Penetration of Color Experience" (2012)

- **Week Six**

- Lecture One: *Consciousness Revisited*
 - * Drew McDermott: "Artificial Intelligence and Consciousness," (2007)
 - * Hakwan Lau and David Rosenthal: "Empirical support for higher-order theories of conscious awareness" (2011)
- Lecture Two: *Representations, Consciousness, and Self*
 - * Watch: "[Anil Seth - Your brain hallucinates your conscious reality](#)," Ted (2008)

Saturday, July 30th @ 11:59pm: Paper Three Due

Last updated: 7/15/2022