

# Topics in Philosophy of Perception

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This graduate seminar will examine a selection of interrelated topics within contemporary philosophy of perception. Each week will focus on a different topic, but the series as a whole will also draw out important connections between the various issues.

The seminar will be co-taught, with the convenors leading students through the material by means of weekly presentations. Background reading will also be set each week, in order to provide relevant context for discussion.

The seminar will run for eight weeks. No prior knowledge of the philosophy of perception will be assumed, nor is any such background knowledge required in order to attend.

Below is the list of topics the seminar will focus on, with associated readings.

## Week 1: The case for representationalism

The dominant theory of perception in contemporary literature is *representationalism*, otherwise known as *intentionalism*. This week will explore the central motivations for this view. A central aim will be to get clear on what reasons there are for accepting representationalism, and whether it deserves the widespread acceptance it currently enjoys.

Primary Reading:

- Chalmers, D. (2004) 'The Representational Character of Experience', in Brian Leiter (ed.), *The Future for Philosophy*. Oxford University Press.
- Siegel, S. (2010) *The Contents of Visual Experience*. Oxford University Press. [Chapter 2]

Secondary Reading:

- Pautz, A. (2010) 'Why explain visual experience in terms of content?', in Bence Nanay (ed.), *Perceiving the World*. Oxford University Press.
- Crane, T. (2009) 'Intentionalism' in Beckermann, A. & McLaughlin, B. (eds.), *Oxford Handbook to the Philosophy of Mind*. Oxford University Press.
- Schellenberg, S. (2011) 'Perceptual Content Defended' *Noûs* 45 (4): 714-50.

Additional Reading:

- Brewer, B. (2011) *Perception and Its Objects*. Oxford University Press. [Chapter 4]
- Searle, J. (1983) *Intentionality*. Cambridge University Press. [Chapter 2]
- Byrne, A. (2001) 'Intentionalism Defended' *Philosophical Review* 110 (2): 199-240.
- Tye, M. (1995) *Ten Problems of Consciousness*. MIT Press. [Chapter 4]
- Hellie, B. (2007) 'Factive Phenomenal Characters' *Philosophical Perspectives* 21: 259-306.

## Week 2: Disjunctivism and the screening off problem

The main rival theory to representationalism is known as *naïve realism*. Unlike many theories of perception, naïve realists are disjunctivists: they hold that the kind of experience involved in good cases has a different nature to the kind involved in bad ones. This week explores a fundamental problem for this kind of view, namely, the screening off problem. We will also look at connected issues; for example, we will explore what naïve realists must say about the bad cases.

### Primary Reading:

- Martin, M. G. F. (2004) 'The Limits of Self-Awareness' *Philosophical Studies* 120 (1/3): 37-89.

### Secondary Reading:

- Moran, A. (2018) 'Naïve Realism, Hallucination, and Causation: A New Response to the Screening Off Problem' *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 97 (2): 368-382.
- Sethi, U. (forthcoming) 'Sensible Overdetermination' *Philosophical Quarterly*.
- Johnston, M. (2004) 'The Obscure Object of Hallucination' *Philosophical Studies* 120: 113-183.

### Additional Reading:

- Sturgeon, S. (2008) 'Disjunctivism About Visual Experience', in *Disjunctivism: Perception, Action, Knowledge*, (eds.) MacPherson, F. & Haddock, A. (Oxford: Oxford University Press): 113–143.
- Siegel, S. (2008) 'The Epistemic Conception of Hallucination' in Adrian Haddock & Fiona Macpherson (eds.), *Disjunctivism: Perception, Action and Knowledge*. Oxford University Press.
- Hellie, B. (2013) 'The Multidisjunctive Conception of Hallucination' In Fiona Macpherson (ed.), *Hallucination*. MIT Press.
- Allen, K. (2015) 'Hallucination and Imagination' *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 93 (2): 287-302.
- Fish, W. (2009) *Perception, Hallucination, and Illusion*. Oxford University Press. [Chapter 4]
- Miracchi, L. (2017) 'Perception First' *Journal of Philosophy* 114 (12): 629-677.

## Week 3: Sense data theories and the transparency intuition

A traditional, and once widely accepted, way of thinking about perception is in terms of the notion of *sense-data*. The received view among contemporary philosophers, however, is that the sense-datum theory is deeply flawed. This week we examine whether that's really the case. We also examine related questions about the so-called transparency of experience. Does the

‘transparency intuition’, whatever it is, rule out a sense-datum theory? If so, what exactly are the constraints that this intuition places on developing a theory of perception?

Primary Reading:

- Pautz, A. (forthcoming) ‘The Sense-Datum View’, in his *Perception*, forthcoming with Routledge.
- Martin, M. G. F. (2004) ‘The Transparency of Experience’ *Mind and Language* 17 (4): 376-425.
- Pitcher, G. (1971) *A Theory of Perception*. Princeton University Press. [Ch. 1]

Secondary Reading:

- Price, H. (1932) *Perception*. Greenwood Press. [Ch. V]
- Moore, G. E. (1903) ‘The Refutation of Idealism’, *Mind*, 12 (48): 433–453.
- Robinson, H. (1994) *Perception*. Routledge [Chapter VI]
- Harman, G. (1990) ‘The Intrinsic Quality of Experience’ *Philosophical Perspectives* 4: 31-52.
- Tye, M. (2002) ‘Representationalism and the Transparency of Experience’ *Noûs* 36 (1): 137-51.
- Kind, A. (2003) ‘What’s so Transparent about Transparency?’ *Philosophical Studies* 115 (3): 225-244.

Additional Reading:

- Johnston, M. ‘A Plea for Expanses’ Manuscript.
- Foster, J. (2000) *The Nature of Perception*. Oxford University Press.
- Dennett, D. (1988) ‘Quining Qualia’ in A. Marcel and E. Bisiach (eds), *Consciousness in Modern Science*. Oxford University Press.
- Crane, T. (2000), in Tim Crane & Sarah Patterson (eds.), *The History of the Mind-Body Problem*. London: Routledge (2000)
- Barnes, W. H. F. (1944) ‘The Myth of Sense Data’ *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 45 (1): 89-117.

#### **Week 4: Perceptual experience and perception-based thought**

Is there an argument for substantive claims about perception from claims about perception-based thought? And what constraints on a right account of perception do claims about perception-based thought entail? This week examines these and related questions, with particular focus on John Campbell’s argument for naïve realism based on perception’s role in anchoring perceptual demonstrative thought.

Primary Reading:

- Campbell, J. (2002) *Reference and Consciousness*. Oxford University Press. [Chapters 1, 2, 6, 7]
- Dickie, I. (2015) *Fixing Reference*. Oxford University Press. [Chapter 4]

Secondary Reading:

- Smithies, D. (2011) 'What is the Role of Consciousness in Demonstrative Thought?' *Journal of Philosophy* 108 (1): 5-34.
- Alford-Duguid, D. 'Thinking Through Illusion' Manuscript.
- Pautz, A. (2011) 'Can Disjunctivists Explain our Access to the Sensible World?' *Philosophical Issues* 21 (1): 384-43.

Additional Reading:

- Alford-Duguid, A. & Arsenault, M. (2017) 'On the Explanatory Power of Hallucination' *Synthese* 194 (5): 1765-1785.
- Johnston, M. (2004) 'The Obscure Object of Hallucination' *Philosophical Studies* 120: 113-183.
- Levine, J. (2010) 'Demonstrative Thought' *Mind and Language* 25 (2): 169-195.
- Ivanov, I. (forthcoming) 'Properties in Sight and in Thought' *Synthese*.

## **Week 5: Perceptual perspective and the problem of illusion**

This week focuses on cases of perceptual illusion and on the perspectival nature of perception. What problems are posed by cases of illusion, and what constraints do cases of illusion place on developing theories of perception? Relatedly, what exactly does it mean to say that perception is perspectival, and how is the perspectival nature of experience connected to the phenomenon of illusion? One central aim is to use these questions to extract constraints for developing a successful theory of perception.

Primary Reading:

- Brewer, B. (2008) 'How to Account for Illusion' in Haddock, A. & Macpherson, F. (eds.) *Disjunctivism: Perception, Action, Knowledge*. Oxford University Press.
- Lande, K. (2018) 'The Perspectival Character of Perception' *Journal of Philosophy* 15 (4): 187-214.

Secondary Reading:

- Macpherson, F. & Batty, C. (2016) 'Redefining Illusion and Hallucination in Light of New Cases' *Philosophical Issues* 26 (1): 263-296.
- Kalderon, M. (2011) 'Color Illusion' *Noûs* 45 (4): 751-775.
- French, C. (2014) 'Naive Realist Perspectives on Seeing Blurrily' *Ratio* 27 (4): 393-413.

Additional Reading:

- Phillips, I. & French, C. (forthcoming) 'Austerity and Illusion' *Philosophers' Imprint*.
- Burnyeat, M. (1981) 'Conflicting appearances' *Proceedings of the British Academy* 65: 69-111.
- Austin, J. L. (1962) *Sense and Sensibilia*. Oxford University Press
- Phillips, I. (2016) 'Naïve Realism and the Science of (Some) Illusions' *Philosophical Topics* 44 (2): 353-380.
- Millar, B. (2015) 'Naïve Realism and Illusion' *Ergo* 2: 607-625.

## Week 6: Causation and Perception

In a famous paper, Grice develops a causal theory of perceiving. This week explores whether, and in what sense, we really should think of perceptual experience in causal terms. We also examine whether the causal theory can be developed even within a disjunctivist framework. A related question we'll discuss concerns, more generally, the relationship between perceptual experience and the physical processes which underpin it.

Primary Reading:

- Grice, H. P. 'The Causal Theory of Perception' *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 35 (1): 121-152.
- Snowdon, P. F. (1981) 'Perception, Vision and Causation', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 81 (1): 175-192.

Secondary Reading:

- Snowdon, P. (1990) 'The Objects of Perceptual Experience' *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 64: 121-150.
- Child, W. (1994) *Causation, Interpretation, and the Mind*. Oxford University Press.

Additional Reading:

- Roessler, J. (2011) 'Causation in Commonsense Realism' in Johannes Roessler, Hemdat Lerman & Naomi Eilan (eds.), *Perception, Causation, and Objectivity*. Oxford University Press.
- Snowdon, P. (2011) 'Perceptual Concepts as Non-Causal Concepts' in Johannes Roessler, Hemdat Lerman & Naomi Eilan (eds.), *Perception, Causation, and Objectivity*. Oxford University Press.
- Child, W. (2011) 'Vision and Causal Understanding' in Johannes Roessler, Hemdat Lerman & Naomi Eilan (eds.), *Perception, Causation, and Objectivity*. Oxford University Press.
- Price, H. (1932) *Perception*. Greenwood Press. [Ch. IV]

## Week 7: Perceptual awareness and structural features of perception

Perceptual experience's structural features are relatively invariant aspects of experience, such as our awareness of the boundedness of the visual field. Various thinkers have put structural features to work in explaining recalcitrant dimensions of our perceptual phenomenology (e.g. the perception of absence). We shall look at what has been said about structural features, and investigate whether we ought to treat these features as affording a distinct kind of perceptual awareness of the outside world.

### Primary Reading:

- Soteriou, M. (2013) *The Mind's Construction*. Oxford University Press [Chapter 5]
- Martin, M. G. F. (1992) 'Sight and Touch' in *The Contents of Experience*. Cambridge University Press.

### Secondary Reading:

- Martin, M. G. F. 'Bodily Awareness: A Sense of Ownership' in J. Bermudez, A. Marcel, and N. Eilan (eds.), *The Body and the Self*. MIT Press.
- Alford-Duguid, D. 'On the Epistemic Significance of Perceptual Structure' Manuscript.
- Mac Cumhaill, C. (2015) 'Perceiving Immaterial Paths' *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 90 (3): 687-715.
- Price, H. (1932) *Perception*. Greenwood Press. [Chs. VI-VII]

### Additional Reading:

- Gomes, A. (2017) 'Naïve Realism in Kantian Phrase' *Mind* 126 (502): 529-578.
- Chalmers, D. (2006) 'Perception and the Fall from Eden' in Tamar S. Gendler & John Hawthorne (eds.), *Perceptual Experience*. Oxford University Press.
- Richardson, L. (2010) 'Seeing Empty Space' *European Journal of Philosophy* 18(2): 227-243.

## Week 8: Berkeley's puzzle and the epistemology of perception

What is Berkeley's Puzzle? How is this puzzle to be solved? We focus on this puzzle, discussed in depth in a recent book by John Campbell and Quassim Cassam, as a way into more general questions concerning the epistemological implications of the naïve realist theory of perception.

### Primary Reading:

- Campbell, J. & Cassam, Q. (2014) *Berkeley's Puzzle: What Does Experience Teach Us*. Oxford University Press.
- Logue, H. (2012) 'The Skeptic and the Naïve Realist' *Philosophical Issues* 21(1): 268-288.

Secondary Reading:

- Pryor, J. (2000) 'The Skeptic and the Dogmatist' *Noûs* 34 (4): 517-549.
- Evans, G. (1985) 'Things Without the Mind' in Evans, G. *Collected Papers*. Oxford University Press.
- Burge, T. (2009) 'Perceptual Objectivity' *Philosophical Review* 118 (3): 285-324.
- Masrour, F. (2013) 'Phenomenal Objectivity and Phenomenal Intentionality: In Defense of a Kantian Account' in Uriah Kriegel (ed.), *Phenomenal Intentionality*. Oxford University Press.

Additional Reading:

- Logue, H. (2018) 'World in Mind: Extending Phenomenal Character and Resisting Skepticism' in Johan Gersel, Morten Sorensen Thaning, and Rasmus Thybo Jensen (eds), *In the Light of Experience: Essays on Reasons and Perception*. Oxford University Press.
- Strawson, P. F. (1959) *Individuals*. Methuen. [Chapter 2]
- Silins, N. (2011) 'Seeing Through the "Veil of Perception"' *Mind* 120 (478): 329-367.
- Brewer, B. (2011) *Perception and Its Objects*. Oxford University Press. [Chs. 5-6]