

Philosophical Psychology

Phil 5331

Fall 2011
Texas Tech

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Psychology is the science of the mind. Philosophy of psychology is concerned with the theoretical presuppositions and implications of that science. In this course, we will examine the theoretical presuppositions and implications of the study of concept learning.

INSTRUCTOR DETAILS

Professor: Jacob Beck

Email: jacob.beck@ttu.edu

Office: Philosophy Building, 265G

Office Hours: Tuesdays 2:00-4:00

MEETINGS

Tuesdays and Thursdays 5:00-6:20 in Phil 264 (Change to Tuesdays 5:00-7:50?)

PREREQUISITES

This course has no prerequisites but is designed for graduate students in philosophy. Other interested parties should consult the instructor.

GRADING

- Weekly response papers and participation in class discussions (30%)
- A 4-5-page paper, due Week 7 (15%)
- A 5-7-page revision of the paper, due Week 10 (20%)
- A final 8-10 page paper, due Week 16 (35%)

WEEKLY RESPONSE PAPERS

Each week, you're required to write up a one-page single-spaced response to that week's reading that (a) clearly and succinctly summarizes an argument from the reading; and (b) raises one objection or interpretive question with respect to that argument. Please email me your response by **noon Tuesday**. These assignments are intended to encourage preparation and to give me an idea of how the class found the readings—which issues were easily grasped and which were more difficult. Late assignments will not be accepted, though you can skip up to two assignments without affecting your grade.

PARTICIPATION

Participation begins with the weekly assignments and a careful reading of the material. It is very hard to discuss material that no one has read or given much thought to. In the classroom, participation is not about quantity. The best philosopher is not he who speaks most. But it isn't exactly about quality either. Our discussions would be terrible if we each only spoke up when we were sure that we had something deeply profound to offer. Rather, the key to participation, and to good discussions, is (aside from preparation) *honesty*. If you honestly don't understand something, you should be brave and say so. We're trying to figure out what these philosophers are saying and why they're saying it. Be honest in stating what you do understand (or think you understand) and what you don't understand, and together we'll try to figure it all out.

TERM PAPERS

Paper topics will be distributed in due course. If you'd like an extension, you should request it at least 48 hours ahead of time.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students who require special accommodations because of a disability should contact me as soon as possible with documentation from AccessTECH in the Student Counseling Center in West Hall. To preserve confidentiality, you may contact me in private or by email.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Plagiarism will be taken extremely seriously. Without exception, the discovery of a plagiarized text will result in failure of the course and be forwarded to the Dean of the College, potentially resulting in further penalties as well. Information on Texas Tech's policy regarding academic integrity can be found at <http://www.depts.ttu.edu/studentjudicialprograms/academicinteg.php>. This link also includes information about how to paraphrase and cite sources.

SCHEDULE & READINGS

The following is a rough outline for the semester, though we'll likely make amendments along the way. Square brackets indicate optional reading. The two books you should definitely purchase are Susan Carey's *The Origin of Concepts* (OUP, 2009) and Jerry Fodor's *Concepts: Where Cognitive Science Went Wrong* (OUP, 1998). Both are available from Amazon and other online bookstores. The remaining readings can be accessed electronically from TTU Course Reserves.

I. Concepts as Mental Representations

Week 1 (8/25): Introductory Meeting (no reading)

Week 2 (8/30): The Language of Thought

- Fodor, *The Language of Thought*, Ch. 1
- Fodor, "Fodor's Guide to Mental Representation"

Week 3 (9/6): Two-Factor Conceptual Role Semantics

- Block, "Advertisement for a Semantics for Psychology"

Week 4 (9/13): Varieties of Conceptual Roles and Their Critics

- Laurence & Margolis, "Concepts and Cognitive Science," pp. 3-59
- [Fodor, *Concepts*, Chs. 3-5]

Week 5 (9/20): Concept Atomism

- Fodor, *Concepts*, Chs. 1-2
- Laurence & Margolis, "Concepts and Cognitive Science," pp. 59-71

II: The Puzzle of Concept Learning

Week 6 (9/27): The Puzzle

- Plato, "Meno"
- Fodor, "The Current Status of the Innateness Controversy"
- [Gross & Rey "Innateness," pp. 1-34]

Week 7 (10/4): A Metaphysical Approach

- Fodor, *Concepts*, Chs. 6-7
- [Gross & Rey "Innateness," pp. 34-39]

Week 8 (10/11): No class

Week 9 (10/18): Learning-Based Approaches

- Laurence & Margolis, "Radical Concept Nativism"
- Weiskopf, "The Origins of Concepts"

Week 10 (10/25): The Puzzle Revisited

- Fodor, *LOT 2*, Ch. 5
- Margolis & Laurence, "Learning Matters"
- [Gross & Rey "Innateness," pp. 39-46]

Part III: Carey on Concept Learning

Week 11 (11/1): Bootstrapping Integer Concepts

- Carey, *The Origin of Concepts*, Chs. 1, 4, & 8

Week 12 (11/8): Challenging the Bootstrap

- Rips, Asmuth, & Bloomfield, "Giving the Boot to the Bootstrap"
- Margolis & Laurence, "How to Learn the Natural Numbers"
- Rips, Asmuth, & Bloomfield, "Do Children Learn the Integers by Induction?"

Week 13 (11/15): Conceptual Change Beyond the Integers

- Carey, *The Origin of Concepts*, Chs. 9-11

Week 14 (11/22): Conceptual Change & Theories of Concepts

- Carey, *The Origin of Concepts*, Chs. 12-13 (esp. pp. 466-538)

Week 15 (11/29):

- Selected BBS Commentaries & Carey's Replies
- Shea, "New Concepts Can Be Learned"

Week 16 (12/6): TBA