

## PHIL 3012: Philosophy of Perception Syllabus

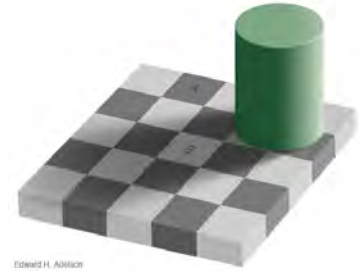
**Instructor:** Anna Vaughn, M.A.  
[anna.vaughn@utah.edu](mailto:anna.vaughn@utah.edu)  
and Canvas messages

**Section:** PHIL 3012-001

**Meeting Times:** T H 10:45am-12:05pm, OSH 135

**Office:** CTHIB 441

**Office hours:** H 12:30-1:30, and by appointment



### Course Description

Welcome to the Philosophy of Perception. This course will be an examination of some of the philosophical dimensions of perception—how we see, hear, smell, taste, feel, and otherwise experience the world. There will be a shared emphasis in contemporary theories and prominent historical accounts dating back to the beginnings of modern science and philosophy. This course meets the Area II requirement for philosophy majors and minors.

3 Credits

There are no prerequisites for this course.

### Course Overview

The philosophy of perception concerns the very foundations of knowledge—how we come to know the world around us. We can trace the central questions of contemporary philosophy of perception back to the early modern era of philosophy when developments in natural philosophy led philosophers to suspect a gap between how the world *appears* and how the world *really is*. These questions culminate in concerns about whether in normal perception our minds function *to reveal* the external world, or instead *to construct* it, or perhaps some combination of these. These questions, raised at the very beginnings of modern science prove to be especially relevant to the concerns of contemporary philosophy of perception. Learning about early modern attempts to solve these problems creates a vital framework for understanding perception.

As we trace the development of a philosophy of perception, we will focus on three central themes: 1) What is the nature of perceptual experience? Are we aware of objects in the world directly or only mediated through representations? 2) Where do we draw the line between cognition and perception? Do we need concepts in order to perceive? 3) How do our sense modalities (sight, touch, smell, etc.) differ?

### Readings:

- Most of the readings for this course will be available via Canvas:  
<https://utah.instructure.com/courses/298188>.

- *Perception and its Modalities*, Stokes, Matthen, and Biggs, eds. Oxford University Press.
  - Currently this book is listed at \$13.49 for the Amazon Kindle Edition, and available for pre-order as hard copy, see [http://www.amazon.com/Perception-Its-Modalities-Dustin-Stokes-ebook/dp/B00MHUPRQ8/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1409016940&sr=8-1&keywords=perception+stokes](http://www.amazon.com/Perception-Its-Modalities-Dustin-Stokes-ebook/dp/B00MHUPRQ8/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1409016940&sr=8-1&keywords=perception+stokes)

### **Course Objectives:**

Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

- Synthesize themes from early modern and more contemporary philosophy of perception
- Recognize the important historical and contemporary literature of the philosophy of perception
- Explain difficult philosophical concepts in your own words so that others will be able to understand you
- Connect important themes in the philosophy of perception with broader themes in metaphysics and epistemology
- Practice and perform relevant communication skills that include, written and oral communication, working together in groups, and improving your research skills and computer literacy

### **Course Requirements:**

#### **A. Weekly Discussion Posts (20%)**

You will be required to compose 10 discussion posts throughout the course of the semester. Discussions serve two purposes: 1) they are an opportunity to continue the conversation from Tuesday's class, or spark further conversation for Thursday's class; and 2) they are an opportunity to ask questions and get answers before class. There will be one bonus discussion week in case you miss a week. Discussion posts are due before class starts at 10:45am on Thursdays. Computer glitches do happen, so please allow yourself plenty of time. Don't wait until the last minute.

Discussions are graded on a credit/half credit/no credit basis. For full credit (10 points), you must write something relevant and interesting using full sentences and correct grammar. A subpar entry that doesn't satisfy the criteria for full credit will receive half credit (5 points). A grade of no credit (0 points) will be given when nothing is submitted.

#### **B. Participation (10%)**

You will earn participation points for your contribution to class discussions and in-class assignments.

#### **C. Class Blog and Mini-Presentations (30%)**

Together we will create a class blog,\* which will bring together interesting content about perception that will be available to anyone on the Internet to search.

The blog will not only be a record of what you learn in this class but will, I hope, be your way to *create* knowledge as well.

In conjunction with this, the last ten to fifteen minutes of most class periods will be dedicated to student mini-presentations. These will be short, 5-minute presentations on a topic or concept we have discussed or read about during the course that you find particularly intriguing, interesting, or worthwhile.

Your fellow students will evaluate the mini-presentations and provide feedback based on the following three criteria: 1) What did you like most about the presentation? 2) What improvements would you suggest before it is ready to post on the blog? 3) What did you learn from the presentation?

The mini-presentations should be posted to the blog within two weeks of your presentation. Note that those who are presenting on the last week will have only one week to post their presentations by the end of the semester, December 18<sup>th</sup>; please choose your presentation date with your schedule in mind.

\*If you have any blogging skills, web experience, or editing panache and would like to help in setting up and prettifying our blog, please let me know!

#### **D. Synthesis Group Project and Paper (40%)**

The topic of the group project is a synthesis of either: 1) Early Modern and contemporary (20<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> Century) themes in the philosophy of perception that we have discussed in class, or 2) how something we have studied in this class relates to broader themes in metaphysics or epistemology (e.g., personal identity, idealism v. realism, external v. internal accounts of knowledge, or rationalism v. empiricism).

The group project is a 60-minute group presentation on your chosen topic, each member of the group will also write a 5-7 page paper, which will be due at the end of the semester (December 18<sup>th</sup>).

There are three major components to this project:

1) *Research*: the group will find two or three articles on their approved topic. They will then evaluate the articles and select one for the class to read in preparation for the group presentation. Allyson Mower from the Marriott Library will be teaching us about effective research methods in preparation for this assignment on Thursday, September 4<sup>th</sup>.

2) *Presentation*: Your group will give a 60-minute presentation and discussion on your chosen article. I will post more information about this assignment on Canvas.

3) *Synthesis paper*: Write a 5-7 page paper, using the articles you have researched as secondary sources. The paper will be due on December 18<sup>th</sup> at 12:00 noon.

There will be a 10% late penalty for each day the paper is late. Papers will be graded on the Writing and Analysis in Philosophy Courses rubric, which we will discuss in detail in class

### Grading Scale

I use standard grading policy guidelines detailed in the University Course Catalog, p. 19-21 (see chart below); grades will not be curved.

A 93-100	C+ 77-79	D- 60-62
A- 90-92	C 73-76	E 59 and below
B+ 87-89	C- 70-72	
B 83-86	D+ 67-69	
B- 80-82	D 63-66	

### Strategies for Student Success

- 1. Canvas:** Canvas should be considered an extension of the classroom. In order to get the most from class you should be logging on to Canvas every week. Throughout the semester, I will be making announcements through Canvas, as well as posting readings, assignments, grades, small lectures, and questions. Please plan to check Canvas regularly. You can also contact me by sending me an email through Canvas.
- 2. Reading Philosophical Literature:** Reading philosophical material can often be challenging. I encourage you to read slowly and carefully. You may need to read each piece more than once to understand the information it offers.

To assess how well you understand what you are reading, ask yourself these questions.

- What was the author's main conclusion?
- How was that conclusion justified?
- What was the author's reasoning for this conclusion?
- What did I read that I did not understand?
- What did I learn that I did not know before?
- What did I read that I thought was wrong?

- 3. Come prepared for class.** Participate in discussions and provide thoughtful feedback to your fellow students.

### Class Policies

#### A. Classroom Etiquette

I expect students to engage in respectful behavior in the classroom and on Canvas. It is important for an effective learning environment for students to follow general rules of class civility. This includes treating other students (and their opinions) with respect. Please keep this in mind when posting in the discussion forums.

Online communications, including e-mail, discussion threads, and chat rooms are equivalent to the classroom and are subject to the Student Code.

- Posting photos or comments that would be off-topic in a classroom are still off-topic in a discussion thread.
- Off-color language is never appropriate.
- Using angry or abusive language is called "flaming" and is not acceptable.
- Avoid using ALL CAPS since it is the equivalent of shouting online, as is overuse of certain punctuation marks such as exclamation points !!!! and question marks?????
- Online communications, including email in Canvas, are University property and subject to GRAMA regulations. Privacy regarding Canvas communications must not be assumed unless mutually agreed upon in advance. Note that email content may be shared with the class when there are valid teaching/learning reasons for doing so and unless mutual privacy agreements for the communication have been previously made.

#### B. Instructor Responsibilities

According to Faculty Rules and Regulations, it is my responsibility to enforce responsible classroom behaviors, and I will do so, beginning with verbal warnings and progressing to dismissal from class and a failing grade—Canvas counts as an extension of our classroom, and the same rules of civility apply. Students have the right to appeal such action to the Student Behavior Committee.

The Rules and Regulations state that “Faculty...must strive in the classroom to maintain a climate conducive to thinking and learning.” (PPM 8-12.3, B.)

#### C. Technology Use

Some philosophy classes discourage the use of technology in class. I believe that technology, like most things, can be both a help and a hindrance. Laptops, phones, and tablets may be used in class so long as they do not prove to be a distraction. If they become distracting, I may ask you to put your devices away.

#### D. Cheating/Plagiarism

Cheating will not be tolerated in this class. If you are discovered to be cheating you will receive an automatic failing grade for the relevant assignment or exam, and you may be reported to the University for misconduct. If you are discovered cheating a second time you will receive a failing grade for the course and will be reported to the University for misconduct.

The University Student Code Discusses both Cheating and Plagiarism:

‘Cheating’ involves the unauthorized possession or use of information, materials, notes, study aids, or other devices in any academic exercise, or the unauthorized communication with another person during such an exercise.

(Student Code I B 2.a, <http://www.admin.utah.edu/ppmanual/8/8-10.html>)

‘Plagiarism’ means the intentional unacknowledged use or incorporation of any other person’s work in, or as a basis for, one’s own work offered for academic consideration or credit for public presentation. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, representing as

one's own, without attribution, any individual's words, phrasing, ideas, sequence of ideas, information or any other mode or content of expression (Student Code, p. 3).

**\*All written work in this class will be submitted to Turnitin plagiarism software,** which shows the percentage of an essay that is unoriginal, as well as the original source. The consequence for plagiarism is the same as cheating as mentioned above.

#### E. Electronic Equipment Failure

It is your responsibility to maintain your computer and other equipment needed to participate in online forums (including submitting assignments) in a manner that enhances your experience. Repeated equipment failures will not be an acceptable excuse for late or absent assignments. Utilize campus lab computers to make sure you adhere to deadlines if you need to do so. I strongly encourage that you do not wait until the deadline to post your assignments.

#### F. Computer Literacy Requirements

You will need to gain access to a computer and to the Internet at least twice a week, as well as to Microsoft Word and PowerPoint. In order to help be successful in our online course, you will need to have a basic knowledge of computers, including but not limited to how to navigate the Internet, attach a document to an email and send the email with the attachment, and use basic software packages (e.g. Microsoft Office). You will also be participating in the class blog.

#### G. Late Policy

Because the weekly discussion posts are time-sensitive (they relate to that week's content), they may not be submitted late. However, there will be an opportunity to make up for a missed discussion, so don't worry if you have an emergency and have to miss a week.

Presentations will be scheduled with plenty of advanced notice. If you find you have a legitimate reason for needing to reschedule, give me as much notice as possible, and I will do my best to accommodate this. Nevertheless, due to scheduling constraints and in order to be fair to other students, it is your responsibility to present on the day you are assigned (this is especially true for the group presentations).

All written work will be submitted via Canvas. There will be a 10% deduction for **every day late**. Note: since the deadline for the final paper is 12:00 noon, if you submit your essay at 12:02 pm that day, this counts as a day late and will incur the penalty. Please plan accordingly. Let me know, *with as much advanced notice as possible*, if you have an emergency, and I will do my best to help accommodate your needs.

#### **Americans with Disabilities Act**

The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in the class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Olpin Union Building, 581-5020(V/TDD). CDS will work with you and the instructor to make

arrangements for accommodations. All written information in this course can be made available in alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability Services. If you require other accommodation, please consult the current policy concerning what you may request: <http://www.admin.utah.edu/facdev/accommodations-policy.pdf>

### **Drop/Withdrawal Policy**

Classes dropped by the 10th calendar day of the semester are deleted from students' records and no tuition is charged. Students may withdraw from a full term course without the instructor or dean's permission until the midpoint of the semester as published on the academic calendar. To withdraw, students must log into the Campus Information System. A "W" grade will be recorded on students' academic record. After the withdrawal deadline, students may petition for withdrawal if they have a nonacademic emergency. Students must submit a petition and supporting documentation to the office of the dean of their academic college. Undeclared, non-matriculated and pre-major students apply to the University College. Students must submit the petition to the appropriate dean's office by the last day of regular course instruction preceding the final exam period. Further details can be found here: <http://www.acs.utah.edu/sched/handbook/wddeadlines.htm>.

### **Useful Links**

The ASUU tutoring center (for hourly fee): <http://www.sa.utah.edu/Tutoring/>  
The Writing Center at Marriott Library -- students can now get free help with their writing: <http://www.writingcenter.utah.edu/>  
Attendance policies: <http://www.acs.utah.edu/sched/handbook/attend.htm>  
Academic Honesty: <http://www.sa.utah.edu/code/>

### **Resources for Technical Support**

If you have any difficulties with Canvas, or need help posting to our class blog, etc. please contact Teaching and Learning Technologies (TLT) <http://tlt.utah.edu/>. There is also a link at the bottom of the Canvas page.

This syllabus is subject to change. Any changes will be announced in Canvas Announcements and also in class.

## Tentative Reading Schedule

### **Week 1:**

T 8/26

Syllabus

H 8/27

Introduction to Phil Perception (No reading)

- **Discussion 1**
- *Choose groups for Group Project (Canvas)*
- *Sign up for mini-presentations (in class)*

### **Week 2:**

**Unit One: What is the nature of our perceptual experience? Direct Realism v. Representationalism**

T 9/2

Aristotle, Selections

H 9/4

Tools for Effective Research

Allyson Mower, Assistant Librarian, Marriott Library

### **Week 3:**

T 9/9

Galileo and the Scientific Revolution

H 9/11

Descartes, Meditations 1 and 2

### **Week 4:**

T 9/16

Descartes, Meditation 6 and Selections

H 9/18

Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book II, Chapters 1 and 2

### **Week 5:**

T 9/23

Locke, *Essay*, Book II, Chapters 8 and 9

H 9/25

Newman, "Locke on Sensitive Knowledge"

### **Week 6:**

T 9/30

Jacovides, "Locke On Perception"

H 10/2

Dretske, "Experience as Representation"

### **Week 7:**

T 10/7

Reid, Selections

H 10/9

"The Cartesian Anxiety" from *The Embodied Mind*

### **Week 8:**

*Fall Break! No classes*

### **Week 9:**

**Unit Two: Perception vs. Conception: Do we need concepts in order to see?**

T 10/21

Siegel, "Which properties are represented in experience?"

H 10/23

Stokes, "Rich Content and Aesthetic Properties"

### **Week 10:**

T 10/28

Crane, The nonconceptual content of experience

H 10/30

**Unit Three: How do our sense modalities differ?**



“Sorting the Senses,” Introduction to *Perception and Its Modalities*  
 (Recommended)  
 “Not All Perceptual Experience Is Modality Specific,” O’Callaghan, in  
*Perception and Its Modalities*

**Week 11:**

T 11/4 Fulkerson, “What Counts as Touch?” in *Perception and Its Modalities*  
 H 11/6 Batty, “Olfactory Objects” in *Perception and Its Modalities*

**Week 12:**

T 11/11 Stokes and Biggs, “The Dominance of the Visual” in *Perception and Its Modalities*  
 • Guest Presentation by Dustin Stokes  
 H 11/13 **Synthesis Project Presentations begin**  
**Group 1**

**Week 13:**

T 11/18 **Group 2**  
 H 11/20 **Group 3**

**Week 14:**

T 11/25 **Group 4**  
 H 11/27 *Happy Thanksgiving*

**Week 15:**

T 12/2 **Group 5**  
 H 12/4 **Group 6**

**Week 16:**

T 12/9 The Molyneux Problem Redux (Locke *Essay* II.ii.8 and 9; Berkeley *Vision* §133-135)  
 H 12/11 The Molyneux Problem (Held, et. al. “The newly sighted fail to match seen with felt”  
<http://www.nature.com/neuro/journal/v14/n5/full/nm.2795.html> )

**Final Paper is due, December 18<sup>th</sup> at 12:00 noon via Canvas. Don’t be late!**