

**Philosophy of mind:  
Perceptual experience**

**Professor:** Dr. Dustin Stokes  
**Section:** PHIL 5450/6450 001  
Tues 5:30-8:30PM Tanner Library-CTIHB 4<sup>th</sup> floor  
**Office:** CTIHB 427  
**Office Hours:** Thur 2-4:00/and by appointment  
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**Course description**

This is a course on the contemporary philosophy of perceptual experience: what is the nature of seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, and touching (perhaps among others)? We will divide the course roughly into two general areas or sets of questions.

What is the *structure* of perceptual experience? This question will divide into several. When you have a conscious visual experience, do you directly see the physical objects of the world, or do you instead only have direct causal access to some intermediary entity: a representation of some kind? Do perceptual experiences have *intentionality*? Are they always and only representational, and can this feature fully explain *what they are like*, that is, their subjective, phenomenal features? Finally, sometimes we have illusory and hallucinatory experiences (or we at least could). Are such experiences of the same kind as accurate perceptual experiences (where what you are seeing is really there)? Or are these distinct kinds of things?

What is the relation between *perceptual experience and cognition* (or *thought*)? What kinds of things get represented in perceptual experience? For example, do we only see colours, shapes, and edges and interpret or infer the rest, or does vision represent things like causal relations and categories? Do we need concepts to see? For example, can I see a cat as a cat, if I don't have the concept 'CAT'? Do higher-level cognitive states like belief and desire influence, in a direct way, how we hear, see, or otherwise experience the world? And finally, to return to a classic epistemological question, can we acquire knowledge of the world through our perceptual experiences? How?

**Text**

All readings will be online, on the CANVAS course webpage:

For PHIL5450 students: <https://utah.instructure.com/courses/169623>

For PHIL 6450 students: <https://utah.instructure.com/courses/169624>

**Assignments/Requirements:**

**For 5450 Students**

20%	Short paper 1	Due: See below*
20%	Short paper 2	Due: See below*
10%	Participation	
50%	Final term paper	Due: TBA

The short papers might also be thought of as take-home exams. You will be given a short list of questions, from which you will choose and respond to one. The questions will be distributed in class, and the papers are to be submitted the following week at the start of class. Your responses should be concise and to the point, and should be approximately 1000-1500 words (or 4-6 pages). You are required to write **two** short essays over the term, and can choose from the following three papers/due dates:

- \*PAPER OPTION 1: **DUE FRIDAY 21 SEPT** (Questions assigned 14/09)
- \*PAPER OPTION 2: **DUE FRIDAY 26 OCT** (Questions assigned 19/10)
- \*PAPER OPTION 3: **DUE FRIDAY 30 NOV** (Questions assigned 23/11)

The participation component is composed of regular participation in class discussion, and in discussion group sessions, held in class. Unless I announce otherwise, the discussion sessions will take place on the dates specified below in the reading schedule.

Undergraduate students will write a short term paper (8-10 pages). This will be on a topic of the student's choosing, but to be first cleared with me in the form of an outline. **Term paper outlines are due to me no later than: Monday 26 November. Outlines will also be posted on the CANVAS course page, and open to peer commentary.** Term papers will be due on the final exam day (as designated by the University).

#### For 6450 Students

5%	Short paper 1	Due: See above*
5%	Short paper 2	Due: See above*
10%	Participation	
5%	Term paper presentation	In class 12/04
75%	Final term paper	Due: TBA

Short papers for graduate students will be on the same topics/due dates as for undergraduates, (see above) *except* that for graduate students the expectations for quality of exegesis and analysis will be appropriately higher.

Graduate students will be expected to participate regularly, and indeed play a leading role, in class discussion and discussion group sessions (see above).

Term paper presentations will take place on the final day of class, and consist of a 10-15 presentation of the student's term paper plan and outline. This will be followed by discussion with the class, which should provide an opportunity for helpful feedback to be utilized in preparing the final term paper.

Term papers (15-20 pages) will be on a topic of the student's choosing. The student will submit a 1-2 page outline and then be required to meet with me to discuss the term paper plan. **Term paper outlines are due to me no later than: Monday 26 November. Outlines will also be posted on the CANVAS course page, and open to peer commentary.** Term papers will be due on the final exam day (as designated by the University).

#### General:

This is a writing intensive course. All of the work/examinations will be written. Your papers will be graded not only on content, but also on grammar, writing mechanics, style, etc.

All paper/exam dates are listed on this syllabus. Therefore, late work/exams are allowed only if arranged at least one week prior to the scheduled due date/exam date, and with appropriate documentation. Unexcused late work will not be accepted.

Plagiarism and academic dishonesty of any kind will be treated with zero tolerance. It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the university guidelines and policies on academic integrity, see the Student Code, section V (“Student Academic Conduct”), Part B (“Academic Misconduct”), online here:

<http://www.regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-400.html>

*If you require special test-taking or note-taking accommodations, please see me.*

**(Tentative) Reading/discussion schedule:**

TU 08/21      *Introduction/history/basic concepts and questions*

*THE STRUCTURE OF PERCEPTUAL EXPERIENCE*

TU 08/28      *Sense datum theory*  
                  Ayer-‘The argument from illusion’  
                  Price-from *Perception*

TU 09/04      *Critics of sense datum theory*  
                  Austin-‘The argument from illusion’  
                  Barnes-‘The myth of sense data’  
                  Firth-‘Sense data and the percept theory’

**Discussion groups 1**

TU 09/11      *Intentionalism*  
                  Tye, ‘The intentionality of feelings and experiences’  
                  Harman, ‘The Intrinsic Quality of Experience’

TU 09/18      *Intentionalism, representation, and qualia*  
                  Dretske, ‘Experience as representation’  
                  Crane, ‘The intentional structure of consciousness’

TU 09/25      *Disjunctivism*  
                  Martin, ‘The Limits of Self-Awareness’  
                  Sturgeon, ‘Visual experience’

TU 10/02      *Active theories of perception*  
                  Noe, ‘The enactive approach to perception: An introduction’

**Discussion groups 2**

TU 10/09      NO CLASS-FALL BREAK

*CONTENT, COGNITION, AND PERCEPTUAL EXPERIENCE*

TU 10/16      *Varieties of content*  
                  Siegel, ‘Varieties of Content’ (Section 3 only) from ‘The contents of perception’  
                  <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/perception-contents/#3>  
                  Peacocke, ‘Scenarios, Concepts, and Perception’

TU 10/23      *High-level contents*  
                  Siegel, ‘Which properties are represented in experience?’

- TU 10/30      *Conceptual vs. nonconceptual content*  
Crane, 'The nonconceptual content of experience'  
Heck, 'Nonconceptual content and the space of reasons'  
**Discussion groups 3**
- TU 11/06      **NO CLASS: GO VOTE!**
- TU 11/13      *Sensation, cognition, and experience*  
Dretske, 'Conscious experience'  
Noe, 'Thought and experience'
- TU 11/20      *Cognitive effects on perception*  
Stokes, 'Cognitive penetrability'  
Stokes, 'Perceiving and Desiring: A new look at the cognitive penetrability of experience'
- TU 11/27      *Knowledge and perception*  
BonJour, excerpts from 'Epistemological problems of perception',  
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/perception-episprob/>  
BonJour, 'In search of direct realism'  
**Discussion groups 4**
- TU 12/04      *Graduate student presentations and course wrap*