

PHIL 405 / 505 – Topics in Philosophy of Mind
‘Intuitions, Conceptual Engineering, and Experimental Philosophy’

Fall Term 2020

Tue, Thu 12:30–1:50 pm (remote)

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Office hours: by appointment (contact instructor in class or by email)
Office: remote until university buildings reopen
eClass site at <https://eclass.srv.ualberta.ca/course/view.php?id=62434>
class meetings will be conducted remotely, URL to join is on eClass

A. Course overview

This metaphilosophy seminar deals with two basic topics. The first pertains to what the proper *methods* of philosophy are. Here we have traditional armchair methods such as the use of intuitions in opposition to gathering questionnaire data as done in experimental philosophy, which is a prominent approach that arose one and a half decades ago. The second topic pertains to what the primary *aims* of philosophy are. Conceptual analysis is the view that philosophy consists in analyzing ordinary concepts, which we already possess but whose definition needs to be properly articulated (e.g., ‘knowledge’, ‘causation’, ‘intention’, or ‘morally wrong’). In contrast, in the last few years the approach of conceptual engineering (aka conceptual ethics) has arisen, which argues that rather than spelling out concepts as they currently are, the philosophical aim should be to improve philosophical concepts, which may require the revision of current concepts (e.g., ‘gender’, ‘race’, or ‘truth’), the abandoning of flawed concepts, or the creation new concepts. An obvious connection between our two main topics of methods and aims of philosophy is that the use of armchair intuitions (about how a concept applies to various imagined situations) would be a suitable method for the aim of conceptual analysis.

We will begin with intuitions and the agenda of conceptual analysis. We scrutinize in detail two-dimensional semantics, which puts forward an account of conceptual content that promises to underwrite the project of conceptual analysis, among other things by evading traditional hurdles, such as the tenet that meanings are not inside the head. Then we turn to the quite different agenda of conceptual engineering. Here we focus on discussions on how to put forward revised, improved accounts of the concepts of gender and race (including an argument that several different concepts of gender are needed).

Afterwards, we investigate experimental philosophy. We take a look at experimental philosophy studies that have implications for traditional issues in philosophy of action, ethics, metaphysics, and philosophy of language. But we also discuss how experimental philosophy has been used to argue against the reliability of intuitions altogether. We conclude with recent defenses of the use of intuitions that also respond to the challenge from experimental philosophy.

B. Prerequisites

To take the class as an undergraduate (PHIL 405), you must have previously completed two philosophy classes (including one class at the 200-level or higher) or obtain my permission.

C. Required texts

The required readings consist of journal articles and book chapters, and are listed below in Section L. Most of the readings can be accessed online via our course website.

D. Course requirements

- Oral presentation 15%
- Participation (incl. written) 10%
- Four brief responses 20%
- Shorter essay 20%
- Term paper outline 5%
- Term paper (final version) 30%

Oral presentation (15%): Every student has to give one oral presentation. Your task as a presenter is to briefly summarize this meeting's readings (highlighting points that you find particularly relevant) but primarily to start the discussion by having prepared some questions (e.g. about problematic issues in the readings). I ask you to prepare a short handout (including discussion questions) and email me a draft in advance so that I can provide comments. Contact me to sign up for a presentation on a particular class date (it is first come, first serve), where you find the schedule of presentations and still open slots on eClass.

Participation (10%): Attendance and active participation is important for this class. Each of you will probably have picked up different points from the readings or have questions or objections, so please share them! There exist several options to obtain participation credit for this remote class, including functioning as a rapporteur for break-out small group discussions. There are also options for written contributions (outside of class meetings), especially by starting topics and replying to posts at the discussion forum on our eClass site. It is also possible to obtain credit for reporting on non-assigned literature (from the folder with additional literature), either by means of a 2-4 minute 'presentation' during the class meeting or by a post on our eClass discussion forum.

Four brief critical responses (5% each): You have to submit four brief critical responses, two in September, and two in October. A critical response is about 300 words in length, and should not just summarize the readings. Instead, it should identify an issue that was not fully clarified in the reading or raises further issues and/or your critical response to one point from the reading. A brief response has to be submitted by the beginning of the class where the reading is assigned, and if several readings are assigned for that date, the brief response can focus on one of them.

Shorter essay (20%): You have to write a shorter essay, which is due on Tuesday, November 10 at noon. Feel free to consult with me about the topic you want to discuss before starting with the writing of the essay, and to send me a draft of your essay to receive comments.

Approximate length of the shorter essay paper: 1200–1600 words if you are an undergraduate student (registered in PHIL 415); 2000–2400 words if you are a graduate student (registered in PHIL 510).

Term paper (outline 5%, final version 30%): You have to write a term paper, the final version of which is due on Sunday, December 20 at noon. An outline that at least lists the issues and the literature to be discussed (but may also be a full-length term paper draft), is due on Thursday December 3 at noon. I will assign a grade to this draft and provide comments relevant for you to write the final version. The term paper should critically discuss an issue from our class, ideally using some of the assigned readings or some of the additional literature that I make available, where of course you are free to find and discuss further relevant literature. You are encouraged to discuss term paper topics and ideas with me before starting with the writing of the term paper outline.

Approximate length of the final version of the term paper: 1600–2400 words if you are an undergraduate student (registered in PHIL 415); 2800–4000 words if you are a graduate student (registered in PHIL 510).

E. Course website

The course has a website at <https://eclass.srv.ualberta.ca/course/view.php?id=62434>. A good deal of our assigned readings can be accessed from this site, and I use it to post presentation handouts and additional material. The site also contains our discussion board. Let me know if you audit the class (or upon login at <https://eclass.srv.ualberta.ca> do not see PHIL 405 / 505 under ‘Course Overview’), so that I can add you to the list of online participants.

F. Schedule of classes

Sep 1	Introduction. Nado, “Conceptual engineering, truth, and efficacy,” Section 1
Sep 3	Intuitions 1. Bealer, “A priori knowledge and the scope of philosophy,” Intro and Sections 1–3 Gettier, “Is justified true belief knowledge?”
Sep 8	Intuitions 2. Hintikka, “The emperor’s new intuitions”
Sep 10	Classical hurdles for conceptual analysis 1. Quine, “Two dogmas of empiricism”
Sep 15	Classical hurdles for conceptual analysis 2. Putnam, “The meaning of ‘meaning,’” pp. 215–35, 242–43, 249–51, and 268–71
Sep 17	Conceptual analysis 1. Jackson, <i>From Metaphysics to Ethics</i> , Chapter 2, pp. 28–52
Sep 22	Conceptual analysis 2. Chalmers, “The components of content,” Sections 1–7 and Section 10
Sep 24	Conceptual analysis 3. Chalmers, <i>The Conscious Mind</i> , Ch. 3, Sections 1–4
Sep 29	Conceptual analysis 4. Brigandt, “A critique of David Chalmers’ and Frank Jackson’s account of concepts” Last opportunity to submit brief response #2
Oct 1	Conceptual engineering 1. Burgess and Plunkett, “Conceptual ethics I” and “Conceptual ethics II”

Oct 6	Conceptual engineering 2. Haslanger, “Gender and race: (What) Are they? (What) Do we want them to be?”
Oct 8	Conceptual engineering 3. Saul, “Gender and race,” Intro and Sections 4.3 and V Plunkett and Sundell, “Disagreement and the semantics of normative and evaluative terms,” Intro, §3.2, and page 18
Oct 13	Conceptual engineering 4. Mallon, “‘Race’: normative, not metaphysical or semantic”
Oct 15	Conceptual engineering 5. Jenkins, “Amelioration and inclusion: gender identity and the concept of woman,” pp. 394–419
Oct 20	Conceptual engineering 6. Ritchie, “Essentializing language and the prospects for ameliorative projects”
Oct 22	Conceptual engineering 7. Ludlow, “Norms of word meaning litigation”
Oct 27	Conceptual engineering 8. Nado, “Conceptual engineering, truth, and efficacy”
Oct 29	Experimental philosophy 1. Knobe and Nichols, “An experimental philosophy manifesto” Nadelhoffer, “Bad acts, blameworthy agents, and intentional actions,” Sections 1–2 and 4–5 Last opportunity to submit brief response #4
Nov 3	Experimental philosophy 2. Sarkissian et al., “Folk moral relativism”
Nov 5	Experimental philosophy 3. Livengood and Machery, “The folk probably don’t think what you think they think: experiments on causation by absence”

Fall term reading week

Shorter essay due on Nov 10 at noon

Nov 17	Experimental philosophy 4. Mallon et al., “Against arguments from reference”
Nov 19	Experimental philosophy 5. Buckwalter and Stich, “Gender and philosophical intuition,” Intro, Sections 1, 4, and 5 Nado, “Philosophical expertise”
Nov 24	Intuitions 3. Kauppinen, “The rise and fall of experimental philosophy” Knobe, “Experimental philosophy and philosophical significance”
Nov 26	Intuitions 4. Nado, “The role of intuition,” Sections 1–7
Dec 1	Intuitions 5. Sosa, “A defense of the use of intuitions in philosophy” Stich, “Reply to Sosa”
Dec 3	Concluding discussion Term paper outline due at noon

Dec 20 Term paper (final version) due at noon

G. Academic integrity and plagiarism

The University of Alberta is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards and to uphold the policies of the university in this respect. Students are urged to familiarize themselves with the [Code of Student Behaviour](#) and avoid any behaviour which could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the university.

The Code of Student Behaviour defines plagiarism as follows ([summary](#)):

No Student shall submit the words, ideas, images or data of another person as the Student's own in any academic writing, essay, thesis, project, assignment, presentation or poster in a course or program of study.

Students should consult the information provided by the [Office of the Dean of Students](#) regarding avoiding cheating and plagiarism in particular and academic dishonesty in general. If in doubt about what is permitted in this class, ask the instructor. An instructor or coordinator who is convinced that a student has handed in work that he or she could not possibly reproduce without outside assistance is obliged, out of consideration of fairness to other students, to report the case to the Associate Dean of the Faculty (see the [Academic Discipline Process](#)).

The library also has [information on citing and avoiding plagiarism](#).

H. Sexual Violence Policy

It is the policy of the University of Alberta that sexual violence committed by any member of the University community is prohibited and constitutes misconduct. Resources and more information can be found at <https://www.ualberta.ca/campus-life/sexual-violence>.

I. Student Services

The university provides various services, including [Student Accessibility Resources](#) (exam and classroom accommodations for students with a disability, chronic health condition, or anxiety disorders), the [Academic Success Centre](#) (e.g., note-taking and writing skills), the [Centre for Writers](#) (writing support, in the basement of Assiniboia Hall), [Health and Wellness Support](#) (including [Counselling & Clinical Services](#) and the [Sexual Assault Centre](#)), and the [Office of the Student Ombuds](#) (advice and support to students facing academic, discipline, interpersonal and financial difficulties).

J. Attendance, Absences, and Missed Grade Components

Regular attendance is essential for optimal performance in any course. In cases of potentially excusable absences due to illness or domestic affliction, notify your instructor by e-mail within two days. Regarding absences that may be excusable and procedures for addressing course components missed as a result, consult the "[Attendance](#)" and "[Examinations](#)" sections of the Academic Regulations of the University Calendar. Be aware that unexcused absences will result in partial or total loss of the grade for the "attendance and participation" component(s) of a course, as well as for any assignments that are not handed-in or completed as a result.

K. Recording of lectures

Our remote class meetings will be recorded, so that I can make the recording available to students who could only connect from a different time zone abroad. (The recording can be made available to other students upon request.) Audio or video recording of lectures, labs, seminars or any other teaching environment by students is allowed only with the prior written consent of the instructor or as a part of an approved accommodation plan. Recorded material is to be used solely for personal study, and is not to be used or distributed for any other purpose without prior written consent from the instructor.

L. Bibliography of readings

- Bealer, George (1996) "A priori knowledge and the scope of philosophy." *Philosophical Studies* 81: 121–142.
- Brigandt, Ingo (2013) "A critique of David Chalmers' and Frank Jackson's account of concepts." *ProtoSociology* 30: 63–88.
- Buckwalter, Wesley and Stephen Stich (2014) "Gender and philosophical intuition." In J. Knobe and S. Nichols (eds.), *Experimental Philosophy, Volume 2*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 307–346.
- Burgess, Alexis, and David Plunkett (2013) "Conceptual ethics I." *Philosophy Compass* 8: 1091–1101.
- Burgess, Alexis, and David Plunkett (2013) "Conceptual ethics II." *Philosophy Compass* 8: 1092–1110.
- Chalmers, David J. (1996) *The Conscious Mind: In Search of a Fundamental Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- (2002) "The components of content." In D. Chalmers (ed.), *Philosophy of Mind: Classical and Contemporary Readings*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 608–633.
- Gettier, Edmund L. (1963) "Is justified true belief knowledge?" *Analysis* 23: 121–123
- Haslanger, Sally (2000) "Gender and race: (What) Are they? (What) Do we want them to be?" *Noûs* 34: 31–55.
- Hintikka, Jaakko (1999) "The emperor's new intuitions." *The Journal of Philosophy* 96: 127–147.
- Jackson, Frank (1998) *From Metaphysics to Ethics: A Defense of Conceptual Analysis*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Jenkins, Katharine (2016) "Amelioration and inclusion: gender identity and the concept of woman." *Ethics* 126: 394–421.
- Kauppinen, Antti (2007) "The rise and fall of experimental philosophy." *Philosophical Explorations* 10: 95–118.
- Knobe, Joshua (2007) "Experimental philosophy and philosophical significance." *Philosophical Explorations* 10: 119–121.
- Knobe, Joshua, and Shaun Nichols (2008) "An experimental philosophy manifesto." In J. Knobe and S. Nichols (eds.), *Experimental Philosophy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 3–14.
- Livengood, Jonathan, and Edouard Machery (2007) "The folk probably don't think what you think they think: experiments on causation by absence." *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 31: 107–127.
- Ludlow, Peter (2014) "Norms of word meaning litigation." *Protosociology* 31: 88–112.
- Machery, Edouard (2008) "The folk concept of intentional action: philosophical and experimental issues." *Mind and Language* 23: 165–189.

- Mallon, Ron (2006) “‘Race’: normative, not metaphysical or semantic.” *Ethics* 116: 525–551.
- Mallon, Ron, Edouard Machery, Shaun Nichols, and Stephen Stich (2009) “Against arguments from reference.” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 79: 332–356.
- Nadelhoffer, Thomas (2006) “Bad acts, blameworthy agents, and intentional actions.” *Philosophical Explorations* 9: 203–219.
- Nado, Jennifer (2014) “Philosophical expertise.” *Philosophy Compass* 9: 631–641.
- (2014) “The role of intuition.” In J. Sytsma (ed.), *Advances in Experimental Philosophy of Mind*, London: Bloomsbury, 11–43.
- (2019) “Conceptual engineering, truth, and efficacy.” *Synthese*. doi:10.1007/s11229-019-02096-x
- Plunkett, David, and Tim Sundell (2013) “Disagreement and the semantics of normative and evaluative terms.” *Philosophers’ Imprint* 13: 23.
- Putnam, Hilary (1975) “The meaning of ‘meaning’.” In H. Putnam, *Mind, Language and Reality: Philosophical Papers, Vol. 2*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 215–271.
- Quine, Willard Van Orman (1953) “Two dogmas of empiricism.” *Philosophical Review* 60: 20–43.
- Ritchie, Katherine (in review) “Essentializing language and the prospects for ameliorative projects.”
- Sarkissian, Hagop, John Park, David Tien, Jennifer Cole Wright and Joshua Knobe (2011) “Folk moral relativism.” *Mind & Language* 26: 482–505.
- Saul, Jennifer (2006) “Gender and race.” *Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume* 80: 119–143.
- Sosa, Ernest (2005) “A defense of the use of intuitions in philosophy.” In D. Murphy and M. Bishop (eds.), *Stich and His Critics*, Malden: Blackwell, 101–112.
- Stich, Stephen (2005) “Reply to Sosa.” In D. Murphy and M. Bishop (eds.), *Stich and His Critics*, Malden: Blackwell, 228–237.

The University of Alberta acknowledges that we are located on Treaty 6 territory, and respects the histories, languages, and cultures of the First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and all First Peoples of Canada, whose presence continues to enrich our vibrant community.

Policy about course outlines can be found in [Evaluation Procedures and Grading System](#) of the University Calendar.