PHIL 405 / 505 – Philosophy of Mind
‘Conceptual analysis, intuitions, and experimental philosophy’

Winter Term 2017
Tue, Thu 12:30–1:50 pm, Assiniboia Hall 2-02A

Instructor:  Ingo Brigandt
E-mail:  brigandt@ualberta.ca
Phone:   780-492-9030
Office:   3-49 Assiniboia Hall
Office hours:  by appointment
Website at  https://eclass.srv.ualberta.ca

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 a decade 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’ and ‘race’), the abandoning of flawed concepts, or the creation new concepts. An obvious connection between our two main topics of philosophical methods and philosophical aims 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 take a brief look at the epistemology of thought experiments in science, which may show that armchair methods work even in empirical science. Then we address 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.

After reading week 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). Then we investigate experimental philosophy. We take a look at experimental philosophy studies that have implications for traditional issues in philosophy of action and ethics, metaphysics, and philosophy of language, but we also discuss how experimental philosophy has been used to argue against the reliability of intuitions. 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 K. A substantial part of the readings can be accessed online via our course website.

D. Course requirements

- Term paper(s) 70% in PHIL 405, 80% in PHIL 505
- Participation 10% in PHIL 405, 20% in PHIL 505
- Oral presentation 20% in PHIL 405

Term paper(s): You must write either one long term paper (worth 70% / 80% of credit), or two short term papers (each of which is worth 35% / 40% of credit). An electronic version of the long term paper is due on Monday, April 24 at noon. If you choose the short paper option, an electronic version of the first paper is due on Thursday, March 2 at 12:30pm, and the second one is due on Monday, April 24 at noon.

Approximate length of a long paper: 3500–4500 words if you are registered for PHIL 405; 5000–7000 words if you are registered for PHIL 505.

Approximate length of each short paper: 1750–2250 words if you are registered for PHIL 405; 2500–3500 words if you are registered for PHIL 505.

I am happy to provide comments on term paper drafts. In the case of the long paper and the 2nd short paper, I guarantee comments if you send me an electronic draft by April 16.

Participation: Attendance and active participation is important for this class. It is the responsibility of each student to come to class prepared to actively engage in discussion. Each of you will probably have picked up different points from the readings or have questions or objections, so please share them! You can also obtain participation credit by starting topics and replying to posts at the discussion forum on our website.

Oral presentation: Those registered in PHIL 405 have to give an 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 (a) prepare a short handout and email me a draft in advance so that I can provide comments, and to (b) make copies of the final version for the whole class, so that everyone has a summary of your presentation. You may give your presentation using PowerPoint (and use a printout of the slides as a handout).

E. Course website

The course has a website at https://eclass.srv.ualberta.ca. Some 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 a discussion board. Let me know if you audit the class (or upon login do not see PHIL 405 or PHIL 505 under ‘My Courses’), so that I can add you to the list of online participants.
F. 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 Judicial Affairs 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.

G. Schedule of classes

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tr>
<td>Jan 10</td>
<td>Introduction.</td>
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| Jan 12  | Intuitions 1. Bealer, “A priori knowledge and the scope of philosophy,” Intro and Sections 1–3
           Gettier, “Is justified true belief knowledge?” |
| Jan 17  | Intuitions 2. Hintikka, “The emperor’s new intuitions”               |
| Jan 19  | Thought experiments 1. Brown, “Thought experiments: a Platonic account” |
| Jan 26  | Classical hurdles for conceptual analysis 1. Quine, “Two dogmas of empiricism” |
| Feb 2   | Conceptual analysis 1. Jackson, From Metaphysics to Ethics, Chapter 2, pp. 28–52 |
| Feb 7   | Conceptual analysis 2. Chalmers, “The components of content,” Sections 1–7 and Section 10 |
| Feb 9   | Conceptual analysis 3. Chalmers, The Conscious Mind, Ch. 3, Sections 1–4 |
| Feb 14  | Conceptual analysis 4. Brigandt, “A critique of David Chalmers’ and Frank Jackson’s account of concepts” |
### Reading week

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading/Assignment</th>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 28</td>
<td><strong>Conceptual engineering 1.</strong> Burgess and Plunkett, “Conceptual ethics I” and “Conceptual ethics II”</td>
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<td>Mar 2</td>
<td><strong>Conceptual engineering 2.</strong> Haslanger, “Gender and race: (What) Are they? (What) Do we want them to be?”</td>
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<td>Mar 7</td>
<td><strong>Conceptual engineering 3.</strong> Saul, “Gender and race,” Intro and Section IV Plunkett and Sundell, “Disagreement and the semantics of normative and evaluative terms,” Intro, §3.2, and page 18</td>
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<td>Mar 9</td>
<td><strong>Conceptual engineering 4.</strong> Mallon, “‘Race’: normative, not metaphysical or semantic”</td>
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<td>Mar 14</td>
<td><strong>Conceptual engineering 5.</strong> Jenkins, “Amelioration and inclusion: gender identity and the concept of woman,” pp. 394–419</td>
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| Mar 16 | **Experimental philosophy 1.** Knobe and Nichols, “An experimental philosophy manifesto” Nadelhoffer, “Bad acts, blameworthy agents, and intentional actions,” Sections 1–2 and 4–5 |
| Mar 21 | **Experimental philosophy 2.** Sarkissian et al., “Folk moral relativism” |
| Mar 23 | **Experimental philosophy 3.** Livengood and Machery, “The folk probably don’t think what you think they think: experiments on causation by absence” |
| Mar 28 | **Experimental philosophy 4.** Mallon et al., “Against arguments from reference” |
| Mar 30 | **Experimental philosophy 5.** Buckwalter and Stich, “Gender and philosophical intuition,” Intro, Sections 1, 4, and 5 Nado, “Philosophical expertise” |
| Apr 4  | **Intuitions 3.** Kauppinen, “The rise and fall of experimental philosophy” Knobe, “Experimental philosophy and philosophical significance” |
| Apr 6  | **Intuitions 4.** Sosa, “A defense of the use of intuitions in philosophy” Stich, “Reply to Sosa” |
| Apr 11 | **Intuitions 5.** Nado, “The role of intuition,” Sections 1–7 |
| Apr 24 | Long term paper / 2\textsuperscript{nd} short term paper due at noon |

### H. Student Services

The university provides various services, including Student Accessibility Services (exam and classroom accommodations for students with a disability, chronic health condition, or anxiety disorders), the Student Success Centre (e.g., note-taking and writing skills), and the Centre for Writers (writing support, in the basement of Assiniboia Hall).
I. 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.

J. Recording of lectures

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.

K. Bibliography of readings


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