

## PHILOSOPHY OF PERCEPTION

**Spring 2010, Phil 381**

Office Hours: Tu, Th 3:30-5, by apt

Office: Wheatley 5-008

**Professor Steven Levine**

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### Course Description

This is a class in the *philosophy* of perception. This puts an important constraint on the subject matter that we will consider. Although we will touch on the psychological mechanisms that causally underlie perception, as well as the way in which perception grounds our empirical knowledge, our focus will be on the structure of perception itself as it presents itself to a conscious subject. We will focus on 4 interrelated issues: 1) the mind-dependence or independent of the objects of our perception (weeks 2-5), 2) the intentionality of perception (week 6-7), 3) the structure of the content of our perceptual experience (weeks 8-10), and 4) the relationship of perception to action and the body (weeks 11-14). In the course of elucidating these issues we will discuss spatial perception, the perception of shape and color, the perceptual constancies, and the different sense modalities. Our focus will be on mostly contemporary work in both the analytical and the phenomenological traditions.

### Required Texts

Reading Packet

All other readings posted on my website: <http://faculty.www.umb.edu/steven.levine/>

### Course Outline (This is subject to revision)

Week	Date	Class Theme and Activities	Assignment
Week 1	Jan. 26 28	Review of Syllabus Classical Views of Perception: Empiricism and Rationalism	
Week 2	Feb. 2 4	Motivating Indirect Realism: The Argument from Illusion	A. J. Ayer, 'The Argument from Illusion' A. D. Smith, Excerpts from chapter 1 of <i>The Problem of Perception</i>
Week 3	Feb. 9 11	The Argument from Appearance and Sense-Data Accounts	G. E. Moore, 'The Introduction of Sense-Data' H. H. Price, 'The Given'
Week 4	Feb. 16 18	Indirect vs. Direct Realism	Strawson, 'Perception and its Objects'
Week 5	Feb. 23 24	Disjunctivism	A. Byrne and H. Logue, excerpt from the 'Introduction' to <i>Disjunctivism</i> J. McDowell, excerpt from 'Criteria, Defeasibility & Knowledge' A. D. Smith, excerpt from <i>The Problem of Perception</i>

Week 6	March. 2 4	The Intentionality of Perception	G. Harman, excerpt from ‘The Intrinsic Quality of Experience’ C. Peacocke, ‘Sensation and the Content of Experience: a Distinction’
Week 7	March 9 11	The Intentionality of Perception: The Phenomenological Perspective <b>First Paper Due</b>	Gerwitsch, ‘Husserl’s Theory of the Intentionality of Consciousness in Historical Perspective’
		SPRING BREAK	
Week 8	March 23 25	The Content of Perception: The Non-Conceptualist Thesis	T. Crane, ‘The Nonconceptual Content of Experience’ F. Dretske, ‘Sensation and Perception’
Week 9	March 30 April 1	The Content of Perception: The Conceptualist Thesis	J. McDowell, ‘Concepts and Intuitions’, excerpts from ‘Non-conceptual Content’
Week 10	April 6 April 8	The No-content View <i>Course Withdrawal Deadline</i>	B. Brewer, ‘Perception and Content’ H. Ginsberg, excerpt from ‘Perception, Generality, and Reasons’
Week 11	April 13 April 15	The Sense Modalities: Seeing, Touching, Hearing	H. Jonas, ‘The Nobility of Sight’ M. Martin, ‘Sight and Touch’
Week 12	April 20 April 22	Molyneux’s Question	G. Evans, ‘Molyneux’s Question’
Week 13	April 27 April 29	Perception, Action, and Embodiment	M. Merleau-Ponty, excerpt from the <i>Phenomenology of Perception</i>
Week 14	May 4 May 6	Perception, Action, and Embodiment	M. Merleau-Ponty, excerpt from the <i>Phenomenology of Perception</i>
Week 15	May 11	<b>Final Paper Due</b>	

### Assessable Tasks

In this class you will have a variety of ways of demonstrating your intellectual engagement with the course material, including 2 five to seven page papers and a comprehensive take home final exam. The final take home exam will take the form of short essays answers on the central issues discussed over the course of the semester.

## Final Grade Calculation

1<sup>st</sup> Paper: 30%

2<sup>nd</sup> Paper: 30%

Final Exam: 30%

Class participation: 10%

## Important Dates

The 1<sup>st</sup> paper is due on **March 11<sup>th</sup>**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> paper is due on **May 11<sup>th</sup>**

The take home final is due on **May 17<sup>th</sup>**

## Attendance Policy

Your presence in class is a minimum condition of your success in this course. Attendance as well as lateness will be noted and factored into your final grade, as follows:

4 absences: final grade lowered by ½ grade (e.g. from B- to C+)

5 absences: final grade lowered by a full grade (e.g. from B- to C-)

6 absences: failure; no credit given

In general, the distinction between “excused” and “unexcused” absences is not recognized (an absence is an absence). Repeated lateness in arriving to class will count as an absence.

## Other Important Information

- 1) Unless otherwise noted handouts, assignments, and other announcements will be posted on my website which can be reached by clicking the link on my faculty page located on the UMB philosophy department website or at this address:  
<http://faculty.www.umb.edu/steven.levine/>
- 2) You need to have a working UMB email so that I can contact you through the wiser system. If you miss assignments or other announcements because your UMB email account is not set up that is *your problem*.
- 3) The readings for this class are listed above by the week. If homework is not explicitly assigned in class, these readings are your homework. The reading schedule may change due to events. If it does I will update the schedule on my website.
- 4) I will only offer makeup exams in the event of emergencies or significant illness. In such cases, you must inform me before the time of the exam (if possible), and provide relevant documentation. Going on vacation is not a reason to reschedule an exam.
- 5) I only give incompletes if there is a really good reason like family emergency.
- 6) A paper will be penalized a whole grade if it is up to one week late. Thereafter it will be penalized a grade each additional week that it is late. ***I do not accept emailed papers.***
- 7) Please hold onto your graded work till the end of the semester. I have never lost a student's grades, but it is a good precautionary measure.

## Academic Honesty

Plagiarism or cheating of any kind in the course of academic work will not be tolerated. Academic honesty includes accurate use of quotations, as well as appropriate and explicit citation of sources in instances of paraphrasing and describing ideas, or of reporting on research findings or any aspect of the work of others—including that of instructors and other students. These standards of academic honesty and citation of sources apply to all forms of academic work: examinations, essays, theses,

oral presentations, and other projects. You can find more information about this on the university website at [www.umb.edu/student\\_affairs/programs/judicial/procedures](http://www.umb.edu/student_affairs/programs/judicial/procedures).