
Psychology and Philosophy of Human Experience

PHIL V2400

Mon/Wed: 1:10 – 2:25 p.m.

Milbank Hall, Room 328

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Introduction:

We will discuss some of the most fundamental questions that one can pose about human experience. For example, we will investigate how we experience time, whether anything really has color, the difference between imagining and seeing, whether beauty is subjective, how we understand other people's emotions, the ways in which the human mind is structured and the extent to which our minds are functionally fractionable. By drawing on both scientific and philosophical texts we hope to combine the best features of both approaches.

Learning Outcomes

1. Demonstrate knowledge about several major concepts and debates about human experience, including the concepts of subjectivity, attention, time and consciousness.
2. Develop the ability to synthesize scientific data and philosophical theories and learn to identify shortcomings in both approaches.
3. Practice evaluating philosophical arguments and developing objections. Recognize the difference between rejecting a claim and giving reasons to think it's false. Learn how to write a philosophy paper, such as how to use one's disagreements with others as a way of structuring one's own proposals.
4. Learn about some of the central views in the philosophy of mind, including: that what we see is merely subjective, that consciousness is nothing more than attention, that the self is a fiction, that imagining is unlike seeing, and that there's no clear divide between seeing and thinking. Study the main arguments for these views as well as the primary objections.

Required Text: *The Thinking Eye, the Seeing Brain* by James Enns (available at the Columbia Bookstore). On reserve, Lehman Hall.

Website: Additional course-related materials will be made available via Courseworks. These will include course announcements, additional readings available as PDF, a continually-updated version of the course syllabus, and PDF files of the course lectures.

Communication: Whenever you write to one professor you should always CC the other.

Exams: There will be one midterm exam (20%) and a final exam (30%) completed in class. These will be in the form of multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, and short answer responses.

Papers: There will be two written papers required for the course. The midterm paper will be worth 20% of your final grade and the final paper will be worth 30%. Three paper topics will be distributed in advance and based solely on the course readings. Both papers should be at most 5 pages when double-spaced using a size 12 Times New Roman font. Late assignments will automatically lose five points (out of a hundred) and will then lose five additional points for each additional day they are late.

Honor Code: Exams are closed-book and no other materials are allowed during testing. Collaboration is not allowed for any assignment in this course. Students are expected to follow the Barnard Honor Code:

We, the students of Barnard College, do hereby resolve to uphold the honor of the College by refraining from every form of dishonesty in our academic life. We consider it dishonest to ask for, give, or receive help in examinations, quizzes, or to use in them any papers or books in any manner not authorized by the instructor, or to present oral or written work that is not entirely our own, except in such way as may be approved by the instructor. We pledge to do all that is in our power to create a spirit of honesty and honor for its own sake.

Further information about the honor code can be found at www.barnard.edu/dos/honor.html.

Class Schedule:

- 9/7 **Class begins (JN / JM)**
Class overview
- 9/12 **What is really out there? (JN)** [Shettleworth, Chap. 3]
The varieties of perceptual systems
- 9/14 **What is really out there? (JM)**
Subjectivity: arguments that what we see is 'subjective'
[Excerpt from Berkeley, *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*, first dialogue]
[Excerpt from Nagel, "What is it like to be a bat?"]
- 9/19 **What is really in here? (JN)** [Enns, Chap. 2]
The in and out of awareness

Bibliography

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