

PHIL 512: Seminar in Philosophy of Mind

Action, Space & Objectivity

RICE UNIVERSITY, SPRING 2018 — COURSE SYLLABUS

Time & Location:	Tue, 2:30-5:00pm, HUM 227
Instructor:	Alex Morgan
Contact:	alex.morgan@rice.edu
Office Hours:	Thu, 11:00am-12:00pm, or by appt.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this seminar we'll engage with several questions about the relations between action, space, and perceptual objectivity. There are good empirical reasons to think that these phenomena are interestingly related — that, for example, having perceptual experience with objective significance depends on representing phenomena within an egocentric space, and that representing phenomena within an egocentric space depends on certain capacities for bodily action. But it has proven difficult to spell out precisely what these dependence relations are, and whether they are metaphysically constitutive or merely causal. We'll try to make some progress in understanding how these various ideas hang together. We'll also explore various other questions about the relation between action and perception, such as questions about the role of action in (i) fixing perceptual content, (ii) grounding the epistemic significance of perception, and (iii) understanding the evolutionary function of consciousness. For the most part we'll focus on literature in contemporary philosophy of perception and action, but we'll also look at some relevant empirical literature in mind & brain science.

COURSE MATERIALS

All readings will be made available via the Canvas site for the seminar. Assigned readings for each week are listed under the schedule at the end of this syllabus.

GRADING

Reading responses (30%)

You'll be expected to write a total of ten 1-2 page 'responses' to one of the readings assigned for a given week. Your reading response should summarize the main points of the reading and identify the main arguments presented in support of those points. You should also try to identify any specific claims or arguments you find especially problematic, and explain why you find them problematic.

But your main goal in writing your response should be to summarize the content and structure of the readings for the benefit of others. This will serve two purposes. First, it will help us keep a collective record of the material we've read that we can refer to over the course of the semester. The goal is to eventually have at least two reading responses for each reading in the syllabus. This will hopefully provide an overview of the various issues we'll be engaging with in the seminar, to help us see more clearly how they hang together. Second, the reading responses will help to focus and guide our in-class discussions. The students who have written reading responses for a given week will be expected to help lead class discussion that week. The discussion will hopefully help us refine, correct and supplement the reading responses in various ways. After class, the authors of the reading responses will be expected to combine their responses into a single document, taking the issues raised in discussion into account, and post this to our collective repository on Canvas.

Papers (70%)

You'll be expected to write one or two papers on any topic covered in the seminar. The total amount of written material should add up to roughly 18 pages (double-spaced, standard font) or 8,000 words. Please make an appointment with me to discuss your paper topic(s) before you begin writing. Papers are due by midnight, April 29.

SCHEDULE

Here is a tentative schedule of readings for the seminar. The schedule is liable to change; any changes will be announced via Canvas.

WEEK 1 (1/9): OVERVIEW

- Briscoe, R. & Grush, R. Action-based theories of perception. In E. Zalta (Ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2017 Edition).

WEEK 2 (1/16): FOUNDATIONS

- Evans, G. (1982). *The Varieties of Reference*. Oxford: Oxford University Press (Ch.6).
- Peacocke, C. (1983). *Sense and Content*. Oxford: Clarendon Press (Ch.3).

WEEK 3 (1/23): ACTION, PERCEPTION & EGOCENTRIC SPACE (1)

- Schellenberg, S. (2010). Perceptual experience and the capacity to act. In N. Gangopadhyay et al. (Eds.), *Perception, Action, and Consciousness: Sensorimotor Dynamics and Two Visual Systems*. Oxford: Oxford University Press (pp. 145-159).
- Grush, R. (2007). Skill theory v2.0: Dispositions, emulation, and spatial perception, *Synthese*, 159(3): 389-416.

WEEK 4 (1/30): SPACE & OBJECTIVITY

- Siegel, S. (2006). Subject and object in the contents of visual experience, *Philosophical Review*, 115(3): 355-388.

WEEK 5 (2/6): UNDERSTANDING ENACTIVISM

- O'Regan, J. and Noë, A. (2002). A sensorimotor account of vision and visual consciousness, *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 24(5): 939-973.
- Mossio, M. and Taraborelli, D. (2008). Action-dependent perceptual invariants: From ecological to sensorimotor approaches, *Consciousness and Cognition*, 17: 1324-1340.

WEEK 6 (2/13): CRITIQUING ENACTIVISM

- Prinz, J. (2006). Putting the brakes on enactive perception, *Psyche*, 12(1): 1-19.
- Klein, C. (2007). Kicking the Kohler habit, *Philosophical Psychology*, 20(5): 609-619.

WEEK 7 (2/20): DEFENDING ENACTIVISM

- Ward, D. (2016). Achieving transparency: An argument for enactivism, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 93(3): 650-680.
- Ward, J. and Meijer, P. (2010). Visual experiences in the blind induced by an auditory sensory substitution device, *Consciousness and Cognition*, 19(1): 492-500.

WEEK 8 (2/27): TWO VISUAL SYSTEMS: THE CASE FOR DIVISION

- Clark, A. (2009). Perception, action, experience: Unraveling the golden braid?, *Neuropsychologia*, 47(6): 1460-1468.
- Milner, A. & Goodale, M. (2008). Two visual systems re-viewed. *Neuropsychologia*, 46(3), 774-785.

WEEK 9 (3/6): TWO VISUAL SYSTEMS: THE CASE AGAINST DIVISION

- Wu, W. (2014). Against division: Consciousness, information and the visual streams. *Mind & Language*, 29, 383-406.
- Briscoe, R. & Schwenkler, J. (2015). Conscious vision in action, *Cognitive Science*, 39(7): 1435-1467.

WEEK 10 (3/13): SPRING BREAK

No Class

WEEK 11 (3/20): CONTENT: ACCURACY VS. NARCISSISM (1)

- Akins, K. (1996). Of sensory systems and the 'aboutness' of mental states, *The Journal of Philosophy*, 93(7): 337-372.

WEEK 12 (3/27): CONTENT: ACCURACY VS. NARCISSISM (2)

- Elder, C. (1998). What sensory signals are about, *Analysis*, 58(4): 273-276.
- Hoffman, D. et al. (2015). The interface theory of perception, *Psychonomic Bulletin & Review*, 22(6): 1480-1506.

WEEK 13 (4/3): ACTION-ORIENTED REPRESENTATION & SENSORIMOTOR INTENTIONALITY

- Bickhard, M. (1999). Interaction and representation, *Theory & Psychology*, 9(4): 435-458.
- Siewert, C. (2005). Attention and sensorimotor intentionality. In D. Woodruff-Smith and A. Thomasson (Eds.), *Phenomenology and Philosophy of Mind*. Oxford: Oxford University Press (pp. 270-294).

WEEK 14 (4/10): EMPIRICAL PERSPECTIVES ON ACTION & PERCEPTION

- Land, M. (2012). The operation of the visual system in relation to action, *Current Biology*, 22(18): R811-R817.
- Hayhoe, M. et al. (2003). Visual memory and motor planning in a natural task, *Journal of Vision*, 3(1): 49-63.

WEEK 15 (4/17): EMPIRICAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE FUNCTION OF CONSCIOUSNESS

- Merker, B. (2013). The efference cascade, consciousness, and its self: Naturalizing the first person pivot of action control, *Frontiers in Psychology*, 4.
- Morsella, E. et al. (forthcoming). Homing in on consciousness in the nervous system: an action-based synthesis, *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*.