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# 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](http://www.barnard.edu/dos/honor.html).

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### **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]

[Except 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
  
- 9/21      **What is really in here? (JM)**  
Why is it so hard to develop a theory of consciousness?  
[Chalmers, "Facing up to the problem of consciousness"]  
  
[Chalmers, "How to construct a science of consciousness"]  
  
[Excerpt from McGinn, *The Mysterious Flame*]
  
- 9/26      **Who am I (We)? (JN)**      [Enns, Chap. 9]  
  
Splitting the brain and fragmenting the mind
  
- 9/28      **Who am I (We)? (JM)**  
Identity, unity, and personhood  
[Dennett, "The Self as Center of Narrative Gravity"]  
[Parfit, "Divided Minds and the Nature of Persons"]
  
- 10/3      **Where am I? (JN)**      [Enns, Chap. 7]  
  
Bodies in space (embodied cognition)
  
- 10/5      **Where am I? (JM)**  
  
In what sense is visual space objective?  
  
[Excerpt from Schwartz's *Vision: Variations on some Berkeleian Themes*]
  
- 10/10      **What time is it? (JN)**      [Enns, Chap. 6]  
Living in the past, predicting the future  
[Oliver Sacks, "Speed"]
  
- 10/12      **What time is it? (JM)**  
Philosophical approaches  
[Dennett and Kinsbourne, "Time and the Observer"]

- 10/17 **How to write a philosophy paper (JM)**  
[Pryor, "Guidelines to writing a philosophy paper"]
- 10/19 **Exam (JN)**
- 10/24 **What is that? (JN)** [Enns, Chap. 5]  
The wide world of objects
- 10/26 **What is that? (JM)**  
The metaphysics of objects  
[Van Inwagen, "When are objects parts?"]
- 10/30 *[First paper due]*
- 10/31 **Aesthetics (JN)**  
[Kaplan, "Environmental preference in a knowledge-seeking, knowledge-using organism"]
- 11/2 **Aesthetics and Sex (JN)**  
*[Last day to drop a course]*  
[Readings TBA]
- 11/7 **ACADEMIC HOLIDAY (NO CLASS)**
- 11/9 **Can I Google that?(JN & JM)**  
[Chalmers and Clark, "The Extended Mind"]  
[Psychology readings TBA]
- 11/14 **What if...? (JN)** [Enns, Chap. 8]  
Visual imagery and imagination
- 11/16 **What if...? (JM)**  
[Pylyshyn, "What the Mind's Eye Tells the Mind's Brain: A Critique of Mental Imagery"]

[Tye, "The Picture Theory of Mental Imagery"]

- 11/21 **What's on (in) your mind? (JN)**  
Mind-reading for experts  
[Scholl & Leslie, "Modularity, development and 'Theory of Mind'"]  
[Stone & Gerrans, "What's domain-specific about theory of mind"]
- 11/23 **What's on (in) your mind? (JM)**  
Philosophy of theory of mind  
[Gordon, "Simulation Without Introspection or Inference From Me to You"]
- 11/28 **Color (JM)** [Enns, Chap. 3]
- 11/30 **Color (JM)**  
[Hibert, *Color and Color Perception*, Chapter 5]
- 12/5 **Putting it all back together (JN)**  
[Samuels, "Is the Human Mind Massively Modular"]  
Massive modularity – one what to rule them all?
- 12/7 **Putting it all back together (JN)**  
[Excerpt from Fodor *Modularity of Mind: An Essay on Faculty Psychology*]
- 12/12 **Conclusion and Course Review**  
[Second paper due]

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| • 12/21 <b><u>Final examination (1:10 – 4:00 p.m. projected and subject to change)</u></b> |
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### **Bibliography**

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