

PHIL2843/ VLST2230: Philosophy and Visual Perception
Fall 2022
Prospectus

Instructor: Tiina Rosenqvist
Email: trosenq@sas.upenn.edu
Meeting time: MW 1:45pm-3:14pm

Tentative Course Description:

This course is about seeing. What does it mean to see something? What do we see, how do we see it, and why do we see it? Visual perception is an area of contemporary research in philosophy of psychology that interacts with empirical sciences and other areas of philosophy. This course is interdisciplinary. We will draw on research in visual ecology, psychology, and neuroscience, and try to bring these different streams into dialogue with one another. We will ask how empirical results bear on the plausibility of the philosophical theories we consider, and how they might guide our theory-building. The course is intended to be accessible to students with a previous course in either philosophy, psychology, visual studies, or cognitive science.

The main content of the course is divided into three sections. We will start by thinking about the nature and structure of perceptual experience itself. What do we see and how do we see it? Do our perceptual states *represent* physical objects and their properties, do we see sense-data, or are we somehow directly “acquainted” with the objects and properties in our environment? Second, we will consider the perception of one particular perceptible quality: color. What, if anything, is colored? Is color a purely physical property or is it subject-dependent in some way? What is the fundamental goal of the color visual system? Third, we will ask how seeing relates to other perceptual modalities and how it relates to cognition and action. Do our beliefs and desires influence what we see? What kind of properties are presented to us in perceptual experience: is it just simple properties like shape, color and motion, or can we literally *see* emotions, kinds, and opportunities for action?

Course Objectives:

Through active participation in this course, you will develop an empirically-informed understanding of key contemporary issues and debates in philosophy of visual perception, improve your overall critical thinking skills, and practice constructing and evaluating philosophical arguments.

Course Structure:

In-person sessions:

The standard format for the in-person sessions is lecture and discussion. There will also be occasional group work. Students are expected to do the assigned readings before class, and participate actively in discussions and other in-class activities.

If the public health and safety measures due to COVID-19 require us to switch to partial or all on-line instruction, the class will (also) meet synchronously on Zoom. In some rare circumstances, asynchronous lectures might be used.

Out-of-class activities:

You are required to take short reading quizzes on Canvas before the in-person sessions. The quizzes are open-book, and *only the ten best quiz scores count towards your grade*.

You are also encouraged (though *not* required) to use the Canvas discussion board and Perusall to share your thoughts on course content, to ask questions, to share links to relevant articles, etc. Both your in-class participation and discussion board/Perusall contributions can count towards your participation grade.

You are required to write two short papers and two drafts of a longer paper as well as reviews of two of your peers' paper drafts. In addition, you will complete an illusion project in which you apply some aspect of what you have learned in this course. You are required to either create a poster or record a video presentation (4-6 min) of the project, which will be made available to the entire class through Canvas.

Assignments & Assessment:

- Attendance & Participation —15%
- Reading Quizzes on Canvas —15%
- Short Paper 1 (800-1000 words) —10%
- Short Paper 2 (800-1000 words) —15%
- Illusion Project — 5%
- Final Paper Draft 1 (800-1200 words)
 - Failure to submit draft 1 on time will result in a grade penalty of 10% for Draft 2
- Final Paper Draft 1 Peer Reviews — 5%
- Final Paper Draft 2 (1800-2200 words) — 35%

Course Policies:

All course readings will be posted on Canvas. Students are not required to buy books.

Attendance is mandatory, but students are allowed to miss two classes without prior notice (unless scheduled to conduct peer reviews on those days).

Students are expected to submit all assignments on time. That said, for the paper assignments students have a number of "late days" that carry no lateness penalties. After all the late days are used up, penalties apply, except in truly exceptional cases. No submissions are accepted if more than seven days late.

Students are invited to attend weekly communal office hours. One-on-one meetings with the instructor can also be scheduled.