Senior Seminar — Concepts

Philosophy 401, Fall 2001

Wednesdays 1-3:50 | The Preston Room (Stetson)

J. Hernandez Cruz, Assistant Professor of Philosophy

DRAFT

[Course Description]

REQUIRED TEXTS


Additional required texts can be accessed on the web. Please find links below in the schedule of assignments. I will assume that each of you has reliable and convenient internet access. If this is not the case, please see me for printouts of the electronic texts.

GRADING

1. Participation

Discussion is essential to the vitality of the seminar. Thoughtful participation in discussion is also one indicator that you are reading carefully. Thus, the instructor reserves the privilege of treating participation as constituting up to 10% of the final grade.

Many students are concerned with this aspect of the classroom dynamic, but it should not be a source of anxiety. Keep in mind that your first priority is reading the assignments carefully and working diligently on the writing for
the course. Thoughtful, honest, and respectful participation derives from these. Every effort will be made to ensure that the class is a welcoming forum for sharing serious ideas. In addition, 'participation' is more inclusive than many students realize. Being attentive and engaged in class, asking clarificatory questions, and discussing aspects of the course with the instructor during office hours all fall under this heading.

2. Attendance at Seminar Colloquia

We will have several distinguished guests visit the seminar this semester to discuss their work on concepts and to participate in our reflections on the themes of the class meeting. Our guests have also been invited to give an evening lecture on their current research. There is an extremely strong presumption and expectation that you will attend these.

3. Seminar symposium piece

Each week, one student will craft a paper to be included among that week's readings. The task of the symposium author will be to render coherent and synthesize the material. It will be their responsibility to provide an overview of the principal issues for that week. Symposium authors are also encouraged to offer critical comments in their work.

Symposium pieces will be due by the early evening of the Monday before our seminar reading. Symposium authors may distribute their papers by email to the entire seminar, or to the instructor (who will then pass the paper along).

Grading on weekly seminar papers and the final paper will be anonymous. Please turn in all of your papers with only your Williams ID number on it (in some unobtrusive place, such as the back page). Papers must reflect original thoughts and ideas. Any direct quotations or paraphrased material from outside sources must be credited and footnoted in your favorite style. Violation of this constitutes plagiarism. If you have questions about how the honor code applies to written work, please do not hesitate to contact me.

4. Weekly seminar papers

Your seminar papers should focus on one thesis or theme from that week's readings. If possible, you should prefer not to write your seminar paper on readings that are purely overview. (Thus, your first choice should be to avoid writing on the Laurence and Margolis essay.)

About 2 pages (3 maximum). Typewritten, double spaced in a 12 point font. No title page. XX% of final grade.

5. Essay on concepts
The final assignment for the seminar involves revising one of your weekly papers into a longer treatment of concepts. Due by 5:00 on December 19th (the last day the Dean's office allows written work to be turned in).

15-20 pages recommended, no maximum. Typewritten, double spaced in a 12 point font. No title page.

CLASS RESOURCES

The instructor holds office meetings each week in Stetson 407. They are:

- Tuesdays 2-4
- Wednesdays 4-5
- Thursdays 2-4

Additional times are available by special arrangement. Students are welcome to visit individually or in groups.

Students with disabilities who may need disability-related classroom accommodations for this course are encouraged to set up an appointment to meet with me as soon as possible and to contact the Dean's Office (at extension 4262) to better insure that accommodations are provided in a timely manner.

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS

(You are advised to read the material in the order indicated)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>September 12</th>
<th>Discussion: Concepts (some history and some assumptions)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discussion:</td>
<td>On Definitional Approaches to Concepts</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>iv) Symposium author: Alex Lees</td>
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</tbody>
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26 Discussion: More on Definitional Approaches to Concepts
ii) Prinz, The Furniture of the World, Chapter 2
iii) Fodor, Concepts: Where Cognitive Science Went Wrong, Chapters 3 and 4

October 3
Discussion: Prototype and Exemplar Theories of Concepts

10 Discussion: More on Prototype and Exemplar Theories of Concepts
ii) Prinz, The Furniture of the World, Chapter 3

17 Discussion: The Theory-Theory
ii) Prinz, The Furniture of the World, from Chapter 4, section 4.1

24 Discussion: Neo-Empiricism
Readings: Prinz, The Furniture of the World, Chapters 5, 6 and 7

SEMINAR VISITOR: JESSE PRINZ (Washington University, St. Louis and Caltech)

31 Discussion: Informational Atomism
November 7
Discussion: Neo-Classical Theories
ii) Section 5, pp. 52-59
   Jackendoff, "What Is a Concept, That a Person May
iii) Grasp It?"
iv) in Margolis and Laurence (1999)
   Rey, "Resisting Primitive Compulsions," in Margolis and Laurence (1999)

14
Discussion: Substance Concepts

21
THANKSGIVING RECESS

28
Discussion: Conceivability
Readings: To Be Announced
SEMINAR VISITOR: STEPHEN YABLO (MIT)

December 5
Discussion: To Be Announced
Readings: To Be Announced