



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

Fodor, Jerry (1997). *Concepts: Where Cognitive Science Went Wrong*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. (Available at Water Street books and on reserve in Sawyer Library.)

Prinz, Jesse (forthcoming). *Furnishing the Mind: Concepts and Their Perceptual Basis*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. (PDF file available from the instructor.)

Margolis, Eric and Laurence, Stephen (eds.) (1999). *Concepts: Core Readings*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. (Available at Water Street books and on reserve in Sawyer Library.)

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)

- September Discussion: Concepts (some history and some assumptions)
- 12 Readings: i) Laurence and Margolis, "Concepts and Cognitive Science," Section 1, pp. 3-8
ii) Laurence and Margolis, "Concepts and Cognitive Science,"
iii) Appendix, pp. 75-77
Prinz, *The Furniture of the World*, Chapter 1
Fodor, *Concepts: Where Cognitive Science Went Wrong*, Chapters 1 and 2
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- 19 Discussion: On Definitional Approaches to Concepts
- Readings: i) Wittgenstein, *from Philosophical Investigations*, in Margolis and Laurence (1999)
ii) Quine, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism," in Margolis and Laurence (1999)
iii) Laurence and Margolis, "Concepts and Cognitive Science," Section 2, pp. 8-26, in Laurence and Margolis (1999)
iv) Symposium author: Alex Lees
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- 26 Discussion: More on Definitional Approaches to Concepts
 Readings: i) Putnam, "Is Semantics Possible?" in Margolis and
 ii) Laurence (1999)
 iii) Prinz, *The Furniture of the World*, Chapter 2
 Fodor, *Concepts: Where Cognitive Science Went Wrong*,
 Chapters 3 and 4
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- October 3 Discussion: Prototype and Exemplar Theories of Concepts
 Readings: i) Laurence and Margolis, "Concepts and Cognitive
 Science," Section 3, pp. 27-43
 ii) Rosch, "Principles of Categorization," in Margolis and
 iii) Laurence (1999)
 iv) Smith and Medin, "The Exemplar View," in Margolis and
 Laurence (1999)
 v) Armstrong, Gleitman and Gleitman, "What Concepts
 Might Not Be,"
 in Margolis and Laurence (1999)
 Lakoff, "Cognitive Models and Prototype Theory," in
 Margolis and Laurence (1999)
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- 10 Discussion: More on Prototype and Exemplar Theories of Concepts
 Readings: i) Fodor, *Concepts*, from Chapter 5, pp. 88-112.
 ii) Prinz, *The Furniture of the World*, Chapter 3
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- 17 Discussion: The Theory-Theory
 Readings: i) Laurence and Margolis, "Concepts and Cognitive
 Science," Section 4, pp. 43-51
 ii) Prinz, *The Furniture of the World*, from Chapter 4, section
 iii) 4.1
 iv) Murphy and Medin, "The Role of Theories in Conceptual
 Coherence," in Margolis and Laurence (1999)
 Carey, "Knowledge Acquisition: Enrichment or Conceptual
 Change?" in Margolis and Laurence (1999)
 Fodor, *Concepts*, from Chapter 5, pp. 112-119
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- 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)
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- 31 Discussion: Informational Atomism
 Readings: i) Laurence and Margolis, "Concepts and Cognitive
 ii) Science," Section 6, pp.59-71
 iii) Fodor, "Information and Representation," in Margolis and
 iv) Laurence (1999)

November Discussion: Neo-Classical Theories
7 Readings: i) Laurence and Margolis, "Concepts and Cognitive Science,"
ii) Section 5, pp. 52-59
Jackendoff, "What Is a Concept, That a Person May
iii) Grasp It?"
v) in Margolis and Laurence (1999)
v) Peacocke, "Precis of A Study of Concepts," in Laurence and Margolis (1999)
Rey, "Resisting Primitive Compulsions," in Margolis and Laurence (1999)
Peacocke, "Can Possession Conditions Individuate Concepts?" in Margolis and Laurence (1999)

14 Discussion: Substance Concepts
Readings: Millikan, "A Common Structure for Concepts of Individuals, Stuff and Real Kinds: More Mama, More Milk, and More Mouse," in Margolis and Laurence (1999)

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THANKSGIVING RECESS

28 Discussion: Conceivability
Readings: To Be Announced

SEMINAR VISITOR: STEPHEN YABLO (MIT)

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