



The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Syllabus

Awareness and perception - 6172

Last update 07-09-2023

HU Credits: 3

Degree/Cycle: 1st degree (Bachelor)

Responsible Department: Cognitive and Brain Sciences

Academic year: 0

Semester: 2nd Semester

Teaching Languages: Hebrew

Campus: Mt. Scopus

Course/Module Coordinator: Prof. Hilla Jacobson

Coordinator Email: hilla.jacobson@mail.huji.ac.il

Coordinator Office Hours:

Teaching Staff:

Dr. Cahen Arnon

Course/Module description:

We will discuss current questions in philosophy of mind regarding phenomenal consciousness, perceptual experiences and the relations between perception and cognition. Some of the discussions will illustrate the interface between philosophy and the relevant sciences (notably, cognitive neuroscience). Among the topics to be discussed: the Explanatory Gap argument and the Hard Problem of Consciousness; Theories of Consciousness (and their relations to philosophical theories regarding the nature of mental states); methodological challenges facing empirical investigation of phenomenal consciousness; 'traditional' philosophical concerns that should be informed by empirical data.

Among the questions to be discussed:

Phenomenal consciousness is widely taken to pose **special** theoretical challenges (especially for the cognitive sciences). Why?

Can there be conscious states about which the subject does not – and in an important sense cannot – know?

Is our visual world as rich as it seems to be, or is it that we suffer from a systematic illusion regarding the very nature of our experiences?

What are the relations between phenomenal character and representational content? To what extent are my basic experiences similar to that of other subjects?

Is it possible to infer from theories about human consciousness sound conclusions regarding the consciousness of system that are radically different from humans in their "hardware" (e.g., AI systems)?

Can our perceptual experiences be 'directly' influenced by our thoughts, expectations, desires and emotions?

Course/Module aims:

Learning outcomes - On successful completion of this module, students should be able to:

Read current papers in philosophy of mind and philosophy of cognitive sciences

Attendance requirements(%):

Teaching arrangement and method of instruction:

Course/Module Content:

- 1) The Knowledge Argument, The Explanatory Gap Argument, The Hard Problem of consciousness
- 2) Theories of Consciousness
- 3) Phenomenal Consciousness and Cognitive Access
- 4) Phenomenal Character and Representational Content
- 5) The Border between Perception and Cognition, Cognitive-Penetrability

Required Reading:

יתכנו שינויים ברשימת הקריאה במהלך הסמסטר
חלק מהמאמרים יהיו קריאת רשות.

Jackson, F. (1982), "Epiphenomenal Qualia"

Levine, J. (1993), "On Leaving Out What It's Like"

Chalmers, D. (2003), "Consciousness and its Place in Nature" (first 5 sections plus section 7).

Doering, A., et. al. (2019), "The unfolding argument: Why IIT and Other Causal Structure Theories Cannot Explain Consciousness"

Block, N. (2009), "Comparing Theories of Consciousness"

Victor Lamme's Youtube talk. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X2sjKghOTi>

Block, N. (2011) "Perceptual consciousness overflows cognitive access"

Block, N. (2008) "Consciousness and Cognitive Access"

Cohen, M. and Dennett, D. (2011) "Consciousness cannot be separated from function". *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 15, 358-364

Phillips, I. (2016) "No Watershed for Overflow: Recent Work on the Richness of Consciousness"

Block, N. (2004) "Mental Paint"

Tye, M. (2009) "Representationalist Theories of Consciousness"

Seager, W. and Bourget, D. (2007) "Representationalism About Consciousness"

Macpherson, F. (2012) "Cognitive Penetration of Colour Experience: Rethinking the

Issue in Light of an Indirect Mechanism"

Firestone, C and Scholl, B (2016) "Cognition Does not Affect Perception: Evaluating Evidence for 'Top-Down' Effects"

Silins, N. (2016) "Cognitive Penetration and the Epistemology of Perception"

Block, N. (forthcoming) "The Border Between Seeing and Thinking". Oxford UP.

Additional Reading Material:

Grading Scheme:

*Written / Oral / Practical Exam 70 %
Submission assignments during the semester: Exercises / Essays / Audits / Reports
/ Forum / Simulation / others 30 %*

Additional information: