

PHIL 488 (X50): Current Research in Philosophy
PHIL 594 (X50): Selected Problems in Philosophy

“Intuitions”

Winter 2012
Mon 18.00—20.50
ETLE 008

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This is a syllabus for the courses. It contains general information about how the course will be run and what sort of things you will be graded on. A separate document will (attempt to) give a preliminary schedule of when certain readings will be discussed in class.

Overview of the topic:

The notion of an intuition intersects with several areas in philosophy. There is first the issue of the epistemic status of intuitions, especially of intuitions concerning one's own mental states. Some writers have argued that the entire notion of an intuition should be replaced by that of a judgment: is there any motivation for this? (What the heck is a judgment, anyway?) Related to this is the issue of what influences one to have a given intuition, and what might cause a change so that one has an opposed intuition. The notion of an intuition also crosses with philosophy of science when one considers the status and relevance of thought experiments. Furthermore, certain sciences – for example, Chomskian linguistics – places the notion of an intuition of acceptability (of sentences) at the forefront of the data that is relevant to any theory. One can wonder whether the notion of such intuitions can bear this weight, and in fact there has recently been an (re-)upsurge in writings that question this foundation for linguistic theory. Related to this was the older argumentation within the Ordinary Language School of philosophy some 50-60 years ago about the justification of pronouncements about ordinary language. And finally, Experimental Philosophy has called into question the use of philosophers' intuitions, and their arguments/motivations will also form a part of this course.

How the course will be run:

Students in this class are either senior Honours students (or majors) or else graduate students; so I intend to run this course as a *seminar*. This means that for every class meeting (after the first) some one(s) of the students will be responsible for leading a discussion about the readings relevant to that meeting. There are currently eight students in total registered for the course, although I expect more will be enrolling at the start of term. So, each student will be responsible for one class meeting. We will agree in advance on the relevant readings for the upcoming

week, and the student will present an explanatory lecture for a short period of the class, and the remainder of the class will be devoted to an entire-class discussion/question-answer/etc. examination of the various readings. We will (try to) determine an order of speakers and topics in the first class meeting. **Since this is a seminar course, both the presentation aspect (for the presenter) and the discussion aspect (for everyone else) is a major portion of your grade. So, keep up with the readings; make lists of clarificatory questions on each reading; consider how the different readings relate to one another; and DON'T BE TOO SHY OR AFRAID TO TALK!** (I will try to hold back my own predilection to talk too much!)

In addition to the presentation, **undergraduate students will be required to write two short (two pages or so) “abstracts”** that describe articles that have not been discussed in class, and **graduate students will be required instead to write a short paper (4-7 pages)** about a topic that is relevant to the class. These various things will be due sometime during the semester, probably just after the midterm time.

Finally, every student is to write **a term paper** for the course. This is to be 8-12 pages for undergrad students and 10-20 pages for grad students.

Grading:

For both graduates and undergraduates:

the term paper is worth 40% of your grade;

the presentation is worth 20% of your grade;

the class discussion (about other's presentations) is worth 20% of your grade;

the midterm work (abstracts or short paper) is worth 20% of your grade.

Note that if you have (unexcused) absences from class, then your grade for discussion and class participation will be negatively affected!

Readings:

The main textbook for the class is

Tamar Szabó Gendler (2010) *Intuition, Imagination, & Philosophical Methodology* (Oxford University Press).

I did not order this book for the bookstore. It is available as an e-book through our library (a permanent link is:

<http://www.library.ualberta.ca/permalink/opac/5007422/WUAARCHIVE>).

If you wish to have a hard copy of the book, consider amazon.ca, where it is advertised for \$65.94. We may not use all of the text, but my idea is that most of the chapters will form the material that the presentations are about.

Other books that may be relevant are:

James Brown (1991) *The Laboratory of the Mind: Thought Experiments in the Natural Sciences* (Routledge)

Julian Baggini (2005) *The Pig that wants to be Eaten: 100 Experiments for the Armchair Philosopher* (Plume Books)...this is a “popular book”.

Michel DePaul & William Ramsey (eds.) (1998) *Rethinking Intuition: The Psychology of Intuition and its Role in Philosophical Inquiry* (Rowman & Littlefield). I've got the library's copy checked out. Please don't recall it!