

**Professor Elisabeth Camp**

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**Course Description**

In this course we will examine what concepts are and what functions they need to perform. More specific topics include whether and how inferential role can play a constitutive role in individuating concepts (atomism and holism); how the reference of concepts is determined (individualism and externalism); compositionality (the language of thought, prototypes, cognitive maps); acquisition and evolution (perception, language, epistemic reflection, non-human thought); and pluralism. For each topic, we'll consider the canonical philosophical background, relevant psychological investigations, and more recent philosophical discussion.

**Readings**

The listed readings are provisional and subject to revision, especially in light of your suggestions. All readings will be posted on Sakai.

**Recommended Texts:**

Margolis and Laurence: *Concepts: Core Readings*

Margolis and Laurence: *The Conceptual Mind: New Directions*

Peacocke: *A Study of Concepts*

Kripke: *Naming and Necessity*

**Course Requirements**

- Weekly readings; attendance; and active, sustained participation – even for auditors.
- Weekly *brief* blog posts – even for auditors.
- For 'non-research' option: a 'squib', 2,500-4,000 words plus c. 3-sentence abstract, focusing on ONE claim from an assigned reading, identifying, explaining and critically evaluating the primary argument for that claim.
- For 'research' option: a substantive paper, 6,000-10,000 words plus abstract. Students will present abstracts in the final class.

All writing should be submitted electronically, in .pdf format.

Everyone – auditors and registered students – should post a brief (*max* 1 para) comment on the week's forum on Sakai before class. This can be an exegetical or substantive question, a philosophical rumination, or a comment on someone else's comments. I will post a question or two by Friday to get things started.

All registered students will lead discussion once (numbers permitting). This does NOT mean summarizing the reading. Rather, you should prepare a 1 page *easily readable* handout that sets up the overall topic, identifies the 3 or 4 most interesting claims and/or moves (total!), and poses 2-3 questions for discussion. Email the handout to me by **Sunday night**. You will take the first **10 minutes** of class, and then step in and out as discussion leader thereafter.

We will be covering a lot of heterogeneous material in this course, and no one (including me) can be expert in all of it. Recognized ignorance is often positively useful, and only rarely a reason for embarrassment. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy should be your go-to guide (and more).

**Schedule of Topics and Readings**

**Tu 9/8** Introduction; The “Classical” View  
[Margolis and Laurence: “Introduction” to *Concepts: Core Readings*]

**1. Inference, Atomism, and Holism**

M 9/14 *Philosophical Background*  
[Locke: *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, II.2, 3, 12, 23(1-11), 24; III.3]  
[Frege: “Sense and Reference,” “Function and Concept,” “Thought”]

- Peacocke: *A Study of Concepts*, ch. 1  
Précis of *A Study of Concepts*

[Harman: “(Nonsolipsistic) Conceptual Role Semantics”]

M 9/21 *Psychological Investigations*  
[Quine: “Two Dogmas of Empiricism”]  
• Murphy & Medin: “The Role of Theories in Conceptual Coherence”  
[Carey: “Knowledge Acquisition: Enrichment or Conceptual Change?”]  
[Margolis: “The Significance of the Theory Analogy in the Study of Concepts”]

M 9/28 *Philosophical Responses*  
[Fodor & Lepore: “Why Meaning (Probably) Isn’t Conceptual Role”]

- Block: “Holism, Mental and Semantic”
- Brandom: *Articulating Reasons*, chs. 1 & 6

**2. Reference, Essentialism, and Intersubjectivity**

M 10/5 *Philosophical Background*  
[Putnam: “Meaning and Reference”]  
[Kripke: *Naming and Necessity*, Lecture 3]

- Burge: “Individualism and the Mental”
- Fodor: “Theory of Content II”

M 10/12 *Psychological Investigations*  
[Medin & Ortony: “Psychological Essentialism”]  
[Stevens: “The Essentialist Aspect of Naïve Theories”]  
• Ahn et al: “Why Essences are Essential in the Psychology of Concepts”  
• Keil et al: “Discerning the Division of Cognitive Labor”  
• Leslie: “Essence and Natural Kinds: When Science Meets Preschooler Intuition”  
[Rips: “Necessity and Natural Categories”]  
[Gelman: “Psychological Essentialism in Children”]  
[Stevens: “Only Causation Matters: Reply to Ahn et al”]  
[Malt: “Water is not H<sub>2</sub>O”]

M 10/19 *Philosophical Responses*  
[Fodor: “Methodological Solipsism Considered as a Research Strategy”]  
• Jackson: “Reference and Description Revisited”  
• Chalmers: “The Foundations of Two-Dimensional Semantics”  
[Johnston And Leslie: “Concepts, Analysis, Generics And The Canberra Plan”]

- M 10/26      *Thick Concepts*  
                  [Dancy: “In Defense of Thick Concepts”]  
                  [Gibbard: “Thick Concepts and Warrant for Feelings”]
- Kalish: “Normative Concepts”
  - Eklund: “What are Thick Concepts?”
- [Blackburn: “Through Thick and Thin”]

### 3. Systematicity and Compositionality

- M 11/2        *Arguments for LOT*  
                  • Fodor: “Why there Still Has to Be a Language of Thought”  
                  • Davies: “Concepts, Connectionism, and the Language of Thought”
- [Fodor & Pylyshyn: “Connectionism and Cognitive Architecture”]  
                  [Peacocke: *A Study of Concepts*, ch. 2]  
                  [Johnson: “On the Systematicity of Language and Thought”]
- M 11/9        *Prototypes and Stereotypes*  
                  [Wittgenstein: *Philosophical Investigations*, §§65-77]  
                  [Rosch: “Principles of Categorization”]  
                  [Rey: “Concepts and Stereotypes”]
- Leslie: “Carving Up the Social World with Generics”
  - Camp: “Logical Concepts and Associative Characterizations”  
                  [Smith et al: “Combining Prototypes: A Selective Modification Model”]  
                  [Leslie et al: “Cultural Transmission of Social Essentialism”]
- M 11/16      *Non-Sentential Thought*  
                  [Fodor: “The Revenge of the Given”]
- Giardino and Greenberg: “Varieties of Iconicity”
  - Kulvicki: “Analog Representation and the Parts Principle”
- [Rescorla: “Cognitive Maps and the Language of Thought”]  
                  [Camp: “Why Cartography is Not Propositional”]
- M 11/23      *Singular Thought and Predication*  
                  [Kripke: *Naming and Necessity*, Lectures 1&2]  
                  [Millikan: “A Common Structure for Concepts of Individuals, Stuffs, and Real  
                  Kinds: More Mama, More Milk, and More Mouse”]
- Jeshion: “Singular Thought: Acquaintance, Semantic Instrumentalism, and  
                  Cognitivism”
  - Goodman: “Against the Mental-files Conception of Singular Thought”

### 4. Achieving Objectivity

- M 11/30      *Acquisition and Evolution*  
                  • Carey: Précis of *The Origin of Concepts* and responses  
                  • Burge: “Steps toward the Origins of Propositional Thought”
- [Prinz: “The Return of Concept Empiricism”]  
                  [Burge: “Origins of Perception”]  
                  [Carey: “Why Theories of Concepts Should Not Ignore the Problem of Acquisition”]
- M 12/7        Review, Papers, and Outstanding Questions
- M 12/21      **Final Paper Due**