

# PH3B4-15 Perception and the Senses

**22/23**

**Department**

Philosophy

**Level**

Undergraduate Level 3

**Module leader**

Matthew Nudds

**Credit value**

15

**Module duration**

10 weeks

**Assessment**

100% exam

**Study location**

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

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## Description

### Introductory description

In this module you will explore the problem of perception (that is, the problem of explaining how perception enables you to think about and act on the world around you) via an investigation into the nature of the different senses and of multi-sensory perception.

You will study recent theories of perception, which have been developed on the model of vision, and investigate whether and how they can be extended to the non-visual senses. In doing so you will cover questions about how we count and distinguish the senses (do we have five, or more than thirty as some have claimed?); about how we can tell that what we see is what we touch; you will examine a range of cross-modal illusions (there are many of these, including the parchment skin effect, where what you hear changes how your skin feels; the familiar ventriloquism illusion; a cross-modal interaction that explains why airline food tastes bad; and a trick to make stale crisps seem fresh) and ask what they tell us about the nature of multi-sensory perception and multi-sensory consciousness; you will examine the *two* senses of smell and their relation to flavour perception (and learn why the loss of smell is often devastating); and you will look in detail at the nature and character of the non-visual senses.

Over the last century, the philosophy (and psychology) of perception has focussed almost exclusively on visual perception. In recent years there has been a shift of focus - both within philosophy and in psychology and neuroscience - to consider the non-visual senses. Much that is new and surprising has been discovered. In this module you will learn about these recent

developments and how they impact on our understanding of the nature of perception.

## Module aims

The principal aims of the modules are to: (i) engage students with a range of central philosophical questions about perception and the senses, in a way that enables them to develop a precise philosophical understanding of the nature and significance of these questions; (ii) engage students with a range of responses to these questions offered by a number of different philosophers; (iii) engage students in close readings of relevant philosophical and psychological sources; and (iv) engage students in critical analysis of the claims and arguments that they encounter in lectures and in the primary and sources.

## Outline syllabus

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

The list of topics below is indicative only. Actual sessions held may differ.

1. Transparency and the content of visual experience. Does visual experience have content?
2. Distinguishing the senses. How many senses do we have, and how do we distinguish them?
3. Molyneux's Question. If perceptual experience is transparent, why is there a question for Molyneux? What is the question asking?
4. Cross-modal perception. How do the senses work together?
5. Multi-sensory perception. The unity of perceptual consciousness?
6. Smell, taste, and flavour.
7. The body and touch.
8. Hearing sounds

## Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- Acquire a sophisticated and informed understanding of a the central problems of perception and the particular challenges presented by the non-visual senses;
- Acquire knowledge and understanding of the ways of responding to these questions offered by philosophers;
- Practice and enhance their written and oral communication skills by engaging in learning sessions and completing assessments;
- Practice and enhance their skills in independent research, analysis and presentation of primary source materials;
- Practice and enhance their skills in critical analysis of source materials with a high degree of complexity;

- Practice and enhance their ability to develop and defend their own philosophical arguments for philosophical positions.

## Indicative reading list

Martin, M. 2002. 'The transparency of experience'. *Mind and Language* 17 (4):376-425.

Speaks, Jeff 2009. 'Transparency, Intentionalism, and the Nature of Perceptual Content'. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 79 (3):539-573.

Sorabji, R. 2011. 'Aristotle on Demarcating the Five Senses' in Fiona Macpherson, ed., *The Senses*

Grace, P. 2011. 'Distinguishing the Senses' in Fiona Macpherson, ed., *The Senses*

Locke, J. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, II, ix.

Evans, G. 1985. 'Molyneux's Question', in *Collected Papers*.

Thomson, J. J. 1974. "Molyneux's Problem." *The Journal of Philosophy* 71.

Campbell, J. 1996. 'Molyneux's Question', *Philosophical Issues*, 7.

Levin, J. 2008. "Molyneux's Question and the Individuation of Perceptual Concepts." *Philosophical Studies* 139(1).

O'Callaghan. 2017 'Seeing what you hear' in *Beyond Vision*.

Briscoe, R. 2016. 'Multisensory Processing and Perceptual Consciousness: Part I'. *Philosophy Compass*, 11.

Briscoe, R. 2017. 'Multisensory Processing and Perceptual Consciousness: Part II'. *Philosophy Compass*, 12.

Macpherson, F. 2011. 'Cross-modal experiences'. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, CXI.

Tye, M. 2003. *Consciousness and Persons*, ch.1

Bayne, T. *Unity of Consciousness*.

Mizrahi, Vivian 2014. 'Sniff, smell, and stuff'. *Philosophical Studies* 171 (2):233-250.

Batty, C. 2009. 'What's that smell?' *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 47, 321-348.

Martin, M. 'Sight and Touch', in Fiona Macpherson, ed., *The Senses*

O'Shaughnessy, B (1989). 'The sense of touch'. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 67 (1):37 – 58.

Fulkerson, M. 2011. 'The unity of haptic touch'. *Philosophical Psychology* 24 (4):493 - 516.

Matthen, Mohan 2021. 'Dual Structure of Touch: The Body vs. Peripersonal Space'. In Frédérique de Vignemont (ed.), *The World at Our Fingertips*.

Scruton, R. 2009. 'Sounds as secondary objects and pure events', in Nudds and O'Callaghan, eds., Sounds and Perception.

O'Callaghan, C. 2009 'Sounds as events' in Nudds and O'Callaghan, eds., Sounds and Perception.

Kalderon, M. 2017. Sympathy in Perception, chs. 2 and 3.

## **Research element**

Students will research their own examples of multi-sensory perception, particularly in the psychology literature, and show how they apply to the philosophical problems that they are addressing.

## **Interdisciplinary**

Covers issues that are at the borderline between philosophy and psychology.

## **Subject specific skills**

Students will be able to discuss clearly in speech and in writing the issues raised by their close reading and critical analysis of the set texts and materials. Students will be able to engage with these texts in a way that demonstrates relevant and appropriate philosophical and scholarly skills. Student will be able to critically evaluate the relevant secondary literature.

Students will be able to analyse and critically evaluate the key ideas and arguments presented in the primary texts and materials, and come to an independent assessment of their merits with the aid of relevant secondary literature. Students will acquire an understanding of central philosophical questions about perception and the responses to these questions offered by a range of thinkers.

## **Transferable skills**

Students will practice and enhance skills in:

Analysis and reasoning

Written and verbal communication

Collaborative discussion

Problem solving

Research

Close reading of advanced texts

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## **Study**

## **Study time**

Type	Required
Lectures	18 sessions of 1 hour (6%)
Seminars	8 sessions of 1 hour (3%)
Private study	124 hours (41%)
Assessment	150 hours (50%)
Total	300 hours

## Private study description

Private study will involve:

Reading for seminars and seminar preparation.  
Researching and writing essays.

## Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

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## Assessment

You do not need to pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Students can register for this module without taking any assessment.

## Assessment group B

	Weighting	Study time	Eligible for self-certification
<b>Assessment component</b>			
1000 word essay/take home exam.	20%		No
Take Home Exam. Consisting of a 1000 word essay.			
<b>Reassessment component</b>			
1000 word essay			Yes (extension)
<b>Assessment component</b>			
Online Examination	80%	150 hours	No
A two hour examination online.			

~Platforms - AEP

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- Online examination: No Answerbook required

Reassessment component is the same

## **Feedback on assessment**

Students will receive written feedback on their essays, justifying the marks awarded and indicating how they improve their work for future assignments.

[Past exam papers for PH3B4](#)

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## **Availability**

### **Courses**

This module is Optional for:

- UPHA-V700 Undergraduate Philosophy
  - Year 2 of V700 Philosophy
  - Year 3 of V700 Philosophy
- Year 4 of UPHA-V701 Undergraduate Philosophy (with Intercalated year)
- Year 4 of UPHA-V702 Undergraduate Philosophy (with Work Placement)

This module is Core option list A for:

- Year 3 of UMAA-GV19 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy with Specialism in Logic and Foundations

This module is Core option list B for:

- Year 2 of UMAA-GV17 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy
- Year 2 of UMAA-GV19 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy with Specialism in Logic and Foundations

This module is Core option list C for:

- Year 4 of UMAA-GV19 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy with Specialism in Logic and Foundations

This module is Core option list F for:

- Year 4 of UMAA-GV18 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy with Intercalated Year

This module is Option list A for:

- UPHA-VL78 BA in Philosophy with Psychology
  - Year 2 of VL78 Philosophy with Psychology
  - Year 3 of VL78 Philosophy with Psychology

This module is Option list B for:

- UPHA-VQ72 Undergraduate Philosophy and Literature
  - Year 2 of VQ72 Philosophy and Literature
  - Year 3 of VQ72 Philosophy and Literature
- Year 4 of UPHA-VQ73 Undergraduate Philosophy and Literature with Intercalated Year

This module is Option list D for:

- UHIA-V1V5 Undergraduate History and Philosophy
  - Year 2 of V1V5 History and Philosophy
  - Year 3 of V1V5 History and Philosophy
- Year 4 of UHIA-V1V6 Undergraduate History and Philosophy (with Year Abroad)
- Year 2 of UHIA-V1V7 Undergraduate History and Philosophy (with a term in Venice)