

**Philosophy 2<sup>2</sup>3<sup>3</sup>: Intuitions and Philosophy**  
Fall 2009  
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1pm - 2:15pm  
Library 209

Hamilton College  
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## Syllabus

### Course Description and Overview

We know a lot. We know that we exist, that we and others have conscious sensations, that seven and five are twelve, and that torturing innocent people is wrong. In part, we know these claims because we construct theories of knowledge, mind, mathematics, and ethics. But any theory must be checked against some data. Among these data are our intuitions: the way the world seems to us. *Intuitions and Philosophy* will explore the role of intuitions in our reasoning in epistemology, philosophy of mind, moral philosophy, metaphysics, and other areas. We will consider arguments in favor of using intuitions in philosophy, as well as research on the fallibility of ordinary reasoning. We will also examine some recent experimental results which call into question traditional philosophical methods and conclusions.

### Texts

Martin Cohen. *Wittgenstein's Beetle and Other Classic Thought Experiments*. Blackwell, 2005.  
Michael DePaul and William Ramsey. *Rethinking Intuition: The Psychology of Intuition and Its Role in Philosophical Inquiry*. Rowman and Littlefield, 1998.  
Joshua Knobe and Shaun Nichols. *Experimental Philosophy*. Oxford University Press, 2008.  
Additional Readings, available on reserve, and on the course website.

### On-Line Resources

The website for this course is:

[www.thatmarcusfamily.org/philosophy/Intuitions/Course\\_Home.htm](http://www.thatmarcusfamily.org/philosophy/Intuitions/Course_Home.htm)

The course website includes an html syllabus, many of our readings, a course bibliography, class notes, assignments, other handouts, and links to websites specifically selected for this course. Only limited material, other than your grades, will be available on the Blackboard course pages. The Blackboard page will contain a link to the course website.

### Assignments and Grading

Your responsibilities for this course include the following, with their contributions to your grade calculation in parentheses:

1. All the primary readings listed below, including seminar papers.
2. Twenty article précis (10%)
3. Two seminar papers/presentations (2-4 pages; 5-10 minutes) (30%; 15% each)
4. Term paper (8-12 pages) (30%)
5. Final exam (30%)

**Article précisés** are 100- to 150- word summaries, or distillations, of some portion of an assigned reading. In preparing for most classes, you should write one précis before class. You may choose to write about an entire article, or to focus on a small portion of the article. If there is more than one reading, you may choose one reading on which to focus. You need not complete précisés for the two classes in which you are presenting a seminar paper. In lieu of up to five précisés, you can write a list of 6-8 detailed questions on the reading.

I will collect twenty of your précisés at the end of the term, on **December 10**, unless you display a need for me to collect them earlier. You will mainly be graded on the completion of twenty précisés, rather than their quality. I expect that the précisés will be useful to you in preparing both for classes and for the final exam.

Classes will generally run as discussions of a 750- to 1500-word **seminar paper**. Seminar papers should assimilate the assigned readings and summarize the main arguments. Critical discussion is encouraged, and need not be fully developed. You are instigating class discussion, focusing our thoughts on the central theses, and raising questions. It is good practice to end a seminar paper with a few questions you believe will be useful for the class to discuss.

Each seminar paper is due at noon by email to all seminar participants the day before the class in which it will be discussed (i.e. Monday or Wednesday). This deadline is necessary for all participants in the seminar to be able to read the paper and prepare comments and questions for class. Classes will begin with a short (five-to-ten minute) required presentation of the main ideas of your paper, at which time you may discuss any particular difficulties in the material, or topics that you were unable to cover in the paper. Your presentation may extend for a longer time. Your grade for the seminar paper will depend on both the paper and your presentation of it.

Your **term papers** will be completed in three stages. A one-paragraph abstract of your paper is due on Tuesday, October 13. A full draft of your term paper is due on Tuesday, November 10. The final draft is due on Thursday, December 3. See the Paper Assignment handout for various options for paper topics. I will be happy to meet with you to discuss your topic, in advance. Also, see the second of Two Additional Activities, below. Failure to hand in a draft, or handing in an insufficient draft, will reduce your final paper grade by two steps (e.g. from B+ to B-).

The **final exam** will be on Tuesday, December 15, 2009, from 9am to noon. Preparatory questions will be posted on the course website.

Both the Writing Center and the Oral Communications Center have an astoundingly wonderful set of resources to help you write and speak more effectively.

## Two Additional Activities

**1. Conference in Experimental Philosophy.** On October 2-3, the University at Buffalo will be hosting a conference in experimental philosophy. On Friday 2, there will be an all-day graduate conference, with a keynote talk by Stephen Stich. Stich's work is a major inspiration for almost all of the readings on our syllabus. On Saturday 3, there will be a workshop in experimental epistemology, including Jonathan Weinberg and Shaun Nichols, whose work we will also read this term. I plan to attend this conference, and hope that you will, as well. I have applied for funds from the Deans' Office, and the Philosophy Department, and hope that they will provide lodging, food, and transportation.

**2. The Thought Experiments Radio Show.** I will be hosting a radio show, this term, on WHCL, called Thought Experiments. I would like each of the students in the class to come on the show to discuss one of the thought experiments in Cohen's book, or any other thought experiment relevant to your term paper topic. You are welcome to come in pairs, and/or to come more than once. We will plan a schedule in class. I plan to podcast the shows from the course website.

**Schedule:**

The readings listed come from three different places:

DePaul and Ramsey, marked on the schedule as 'DR'

Knobe and Nichols, marked on the schedule as 'EP'

Handouts, available on the website or on ereserve

**Part I: Theoretical Framework**

Class	Date	Topic	Readings to do <i>before</i> class
1	Thursday 8/27	Thought Experiments, Intuitions, and X-Phi	
2	Tuesday 9/1	Foundationalism: Rationalism and Empiricism	Descartes, selections from <i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i> and <i>Objections and Replies</i> Locke, "Clear and Distinct Perception" Hume, selections from <i>An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding</i>
3	Thursday 9/3	Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle	Melchert, "Analysis" Ayer, "Are Mistakes About One's Own Immediate Experience Only Verbal"
4	Tuesday 9/8	The Myth of the Given	Sellars, "Does Empirical Knowledge Have a Foundation?"
5	Thursday 9/10	Reflective Equilibrium in Science	Goodman, "The New Riddle of Induction"
6	Tuesday 9/15	The Scientific Method	Quine and Ullian, from <i>The Web of Belief</i>
7	Thursday 9/17	Reflective Equilibrium in Ethics	Rawls, from <i>A Theory of Justice</i>
8	Tuesday 9/22	Reflective Equilibrium in Linguistics	Chomsky, from <i>Knowledge of Language</i>

**Part II: Intuitions In Philosophy**

Class	Date	Topic	Readings to do <i>before</i> class
9	Thursday 9/24	Problems with Rationality	Stich and Nisbett, "Justification and the Psychology of Human Reasoning"
10	Tuesday 9/29	Practical Reasoning	Shafir (DR 4)
11	Thursday 10/1	Epistemic Relativism	Weinberg, Nichols, and Stich (EP 2)
12	Tuesday 10/6	Descriptivism and Direct Reference	Machery, Mallon, Nichols, and Stich (EP 3)
13	Thursday 10/8	Free Will and Moral Responsibility I	Frankfort, "Alternative Possibilities and Moral Responsibility"

Class	Date	Topic	Readings to do <i>before</i> class
14	Tuesday 10/13	Free Will and Moral Responsibility II <b>Abstract of Term Paper Due</b>	Woolfolk, Doris, and Darley (EP 4)
15	Tuesday 10/20	Free Will and Moral Responsibility III	Nahmias, Morris, Nadelhoffer, and Turner (EP 5)
16	Thursday 10/22	Free Will and Moral Responsibility IV	Nichols and Knobe (EP 6)
17	Tuesday 10/27	Prospect Theory and the Doctrine of Doing and Allowing	Horowitz (DR 9)
18	Thursday 10/29	Self-Trust	Foley (DR 13)
19	Tuesday 11/3	Intentionality	Knobe (EP7)
20	Thursday 11/5	Folk Psychology and Juror Impartiality	Nadelhoffer (EP 8)

**Part III: How To Do Philosophy?**

Class	Date	Topic	Readings to do <i>before</i> class
21	Tuesday 11/10	Philosophical Intuition and Psychology <b>Rough Draft of Term Paper Due</b>	Gopnik and Schwitzgebel (DR 5)
22	Thursday 11/12	Reflective Equilibrium and the Scientific Method	Cummins (DR7)
23	Tuesday 11/17	Defending Intuition I	Bealer (DR 12)
24	Thursday 11/19	Defending Intuition II	Bealer (DR 12)
25	Tuesday 12/1	Naturalizing Intuition	Kornblith (DR 8)
26	Thursday 12/3	Empirical Philosophy <b>Final Draft of Term Paper Due</b>	Prinz (EP 10)
27	Tuesday 12/8	Whither Reflective Equilibrium	DePaul (DR 16)
28	Thursday 12/10	Intuitions and X-Phi <b>Article Précises Due</b>	Sosa (DR 14) and (EP 12)

For additional readings, including background on the philosophical topics in Part II of the course, and full bibliographical information, see the Course Bibliography, available on the course website, and as a handout.

Final Exam: Tuesday December 15, 9am to noon.