

PHILOSOPHICAL INTUITIONS

<i>Times</i>	MWF 9:30-11:45, Gilman 17
<i>Instructor</i>	Tammo Lossau (jlossau1@jhu.edu)
<i>Office hours</i>	MF 12:00-12:45, room tba

GENERAL INFORMATION

Course Description

If a train is running at five people tied to the track and the only chance to save them is to push a fat person down a bridge to stop the train, should I really do this? Does the length of a flagpole's shadow explain the height of the pole just as well as the height of the pole explains the length of the shadow? Somehow, most people are moved to reply "No" to both of these questions without having to undergo a great deal of deliberation. Such immediate responses are typically referred to as *intuitions*. At least according to a prevalent conception, analytic philosophy frequently appeals to intuitions; but only recently, philosophers have discussed the role of intuitions more explicitly. In this course, we will discuss three questions that naturally arise: (1) What exactly are (philosophical) intuitions? We will look at some philosophical attempts, but also explore the perspective of cognitive science. (2) Do philosophers really appeal to intuitions as frequently as they seem to think? Herman Cappelen (2012) has recently suggested otherwise and thereby caused a heated metaphilosophical debate. (3) Which role *should* intuitions play in philosophy? We can, quite independently of the actual role of intuitions in philosophy, ask whether or in which type of cases intuitions are in fact good evidence for philosophical claims. Champions of the so-called *negative program* of experimental philosophy try to uncover the degree to which intuitions are influenced by apparently philosophically irrelevant factors and use their results to argue that we should abstain from appealing to intuitions. Others have taken more nuanced approaches that allow intuitions as evidence for philosophical claims if the nature of the claim and our best understanding of the kind of intuitions involved do indeed allow for the intuitions to be truth-indicative.

Goals

There are four main goals of this course: (1) understanding the main lines of reasoning within the metaphilosophical debate about intuitions; (2) being able to discuss (alleged) appeals to intuitions in philosophical literature at an advanced level; (3) the ability to closely analyze arguments and point out their assumptions precisely and (4) getting a sense of how philosophy can benefit from cognitive science. According to a popular proverb among philosophers, what you can learn when studying philosophy is *reading* and *writing*. In that sense, this course is supposed to increase reading abilities.

Requirements

This class may be taken fully graded or graded satisfactory/unsatisfactory. In any case, a satisfactory grade requires regular attendance, a class presentation and a short essay. Class presentations will be "case studies" of about 10 minutes on one prominent philosophical passage which, at least allegedly, appeals to intuitions. Your role is that of an expert on this passage, so you need to supply the relevant bit of context and the content of the passage, ideally even tell us about the impact of that passage. A list of presentation topics is included as an appendix; if you have another interesting passage you would like to present on, please talk to me. Essays should be 6-8 page discussions (preferably) of

the topic of your presentation. If you need a grade, participation, presentation and paper will be graded and count one third towards your final grade.

*Academic
Integrity*

Don't cheat! It is your responsibility that within your paper and presentation, any idea that is not your own is clearly credited to that source. This includes any rephrased version, and it entails that you not only cite the source within the paper, but at every occasion when you discuss material originating from that source, marking clearly what the extent of that overlap is. If you plagiarize, I will find you and I will fight you!

Accommodations

If you are a student with a disability or believe that you might have a disability that requires special accommodations, please contact Student Disability Services to obtain a letter from a specialist: Garland 385; (410) 516 4720; studentdisabilityservices@jhu.edu

CLASS SCHEDULE

May 31

Introduction and housekeeping; the case of the Gettier debate

Seminar text: [Gettier 1963].

Further readings: [Weinberg et al. 2001], [Machery et al. 2015].

Part I What are Intuitions?

June 2

Philosophical theories of intuition I: defining intuitions

Seminar texts: [Alexander 2012, 22-43] [Pust 2000, 43-6].

Further readings: [Bealer 1998], [Sosa 1998], [Sosa 2007].

June 5

Philosophical theories of intuition II: Williamson and his critics

Seminar texts: [Williamson 2007, 215-20], [Chudnoff 2011].

June 7

Intuitions in cognitive science

Seminar text: [Kahneman 2011, 19-30; 50-70; 89-105].

Further reading: [Nado 2014].

Part II Are Intuitions Central to Philosophy?

June 9

Cappelen's linguistic argument

Seminar text: [Cappelen 2012, 29-60].

Further readings: [Weinberg 2014].

June 12

Cappelen's empirical argument

Seminar text: [Cappelen 2012, 130-163]

Further readings: [Deutsch 2010], [Chalmers 2014].

Part III Intuitions as Evidence?

- June 14* Weighing intuitions
Seminar text: [Weatherson 2003]
Further readings: [Lycan 2006]
- June 16* The case against intuitions I: distorting factors
Seminar text: [Swain et al. 2008].
Further readings: [Kahneman 2011, 50-58; 119-28], [Alexander et al. 2010].
- June 19* The case against intuitions II: Weinberg's challenge
Seminar text: [Weinberg 2007].
Further readings: [Grundmann 2010], [Ichikawa 2010].
- June 21* The "Positive Program" of Experimental Philosophy
Seminar text: [Stich & Tobia 2016].
Further readings: [Nichols & Knobe 2007].
- June 23* Understanding and assessing intuitions
Seminar text: [De Cruz 2015]
Further readings: [McCauley 2011].
- June 26* Boyd and Nagel on epistemic intuitions
Seminar text: [Boyd & Nagel 2014].
Further readings: [Nagel 2012].
- June 28* Debunking moral intuitions
Seminar text: [Singer 2005].
Further readings: [Greene et al. 2001], [Street 2006].
- June 30* Wrap-Up Discussion

ALSO NOTE:

- June 28- July 1* 43rd Annual Meeting of the Society for Philosophy and Psychology, see <http://www.socphilpsych.org/>.

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APPENDIX: PRESENTATION TOPICS

<i>Ethics</i>	The Trolley Cases: [Foot 1967, 8-9] and [Thomson 1985, 1395-6].
	The Sherriff Case and Smart’s reaction [McCloskey 1957, 468-9] and [Smart 1973, 69-71].
	The Violinist: [Thomson 1971, 48-9].
	The Asian Disease (“framing effects”): [Tversky/Kahneman 1981] or [Kahneman 2011, 368-74].
<i>Metaphysics</i>	Time Without Change: [Shoemaker 1969, 369-71]
<i>Epistemology</i>	Fake Barn County: [Goldman 1976, 772-3].
	The Painted Mule: [Dretske 1970, 1015-17].
<i>Philosophy of Language</i>	Kripke’s Gödel Case: [Kripke 1980, 83-4].
	Twin Earth: [Putnam 1975, 139-41]
	Gricean Implicature (“explaining away” intuitions): [Grice 1989, 24-37].
<i>Philosophy of Mind</i>	The Swampman [Davidson 1987, 443-4].
	The Chinese Room[Searle 1980, 417-8].
	What Mary (and Fred) Didn’t Know [Jackson 1982, 128-30].
	Chalmers’ Zombies [Chalmers 1996, 94-9].
<i>Philosophy of Science</i>	Bromberger’s Flagpole: [Salmon 1989, 47], [van Fraassen 1980, 132-4]. ¹

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¹ Sylvain Bromberger never developed this example in written work, but brought it up in person as an objection to a model of scientific explanation to Carl Hempel. For the history of this example, see [Bromberger 1992, 8] and [Salmon 1989, 189, fn. 12].

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