

**WESTERN UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
Undergraduate Course Outline 2018-19**

Philosophy 4410: Survey in Philosophy of Mind; Topic: Concepts

**Winter Term 2019
W 11:30 - 2:30
STVH 1145**

**Instructor: Chris Viger
STVH 4145
Office Number, Office Hours: W 2:30 -- 4:30
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DESCRIPTION

Concepts are considered to be the essential elements or building blocks of thought. In this course, we will read primary sources articulating various theories of concepts from philosophy, psychology, and neuroscience. We will review the strengths and weaknesses of views that concepts are definitions, prototypes, exemplars, stereotypes, or words in a language of thought. We also study various constraints that have been suggested for any theory of concepts, such as that they must compose or whether they are holistic or atomistic and critically assess those constraints. We conclude by considering how the human brain is structured to facilitate the acquisition of concepts.

TEXTS

Margolis, E. and Laurence, S. (Eds.) (1999). *Concepts: Core Readings*. Cambridge, MA: Bradford, MIT Press.

OBJECTIVES

1. Develop critical reading and writing skills necessary for graduate work in philosophy.
2. Develop oral presentation skills of original source material in contemporary philosophy of mind.
3. Develop writing skills for succinctly summarizing difficult material.
4. Learn specific philosophical, psychological, and neuro-scientific theories about the nature of concepts, including definitions, prototypes, stereotypes, exemplars, symbols in a language of thought, and the spoke and hub model.
5. Develop essay writing skills to the standard expected of graduate work in philosophy.

REQUIREMENTS

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| 1. Weekly Abstracts (100 words) | 10% |
| 2. Position Summaries (3 x 500 words) | 30% |
| 3. Essay Outline | 10% |
| 4. Final Essay (2500-3500 words) | 50% |

AUDIT

Students wishing to audit the course should consult with the instructor prior to or during the first