

# SEMINAR ON IMAGINATION

Philosophy 185L<sup>1</sup>

Spring 2009

Monday nights, 7–10 p.m., Pearsons 203

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Despite its prominence in our lives, imagination isn't usually a central philosophical topic in its own right. But it probably should be. Imagination plays an underappreciated and crucial role in many philosophical debates, so it's important to understand what it is, how it works, and how it's deployed in philosophical arguments. That's our task.



## READINGS

There is a textbook, available at Huntley.

Nichols, S. (Ed.) (2006). *The architecture of the imagination*. Oxford University Press.

It's a bit expensive; I apologize about that but there's nothing to be done; we're going to read everything in there. Fortunately other readings are available on...

## SAKAI

We use it. You will also submit all work via your Sakai "Drop Box." If you are a 6C (=5C or CGU) student you should have access to Sakai, and if you are registered for our course then our course site should already be visible. Please verify right away that you have access to *Sakai*.

Note on readings: Many readings listed in Sakai are simply links to archived journal articles, which are viewable by subscription only. The 6Cs have a subscription, but you need to be on a 6C network. Just to be clear: access to Sakai ≠ access to journal websites. You can access Sakai off-campus easily; journals websites, not so easily (you need a proxy server, or VPN...)

## EXPECTATIONS

Because this is an advanced seminar I expect you to have some background in philosophy, and preferably in metaphysics & epistemology (for example, Phil 30 – "Knowledge, Mind &

Existence"). If you are interested in the course but haven't taken any philosophy before, please talk to me about your background.

I intend to run this course like a graduate seminar. Each week we will examine three to six papers in detail; typically we'll discuss a couple of papers for about half the session, take a break, and then turn to the others.

Discussions seminars work when everyone comes prepared, with lots of ideas about the readings to share! Hence regular participation is both encouraged and expected. This brings me to...

## READING RESPONSES

Most of what you'll get out of this course you'll get out of discussions; the readings will often make sense only in light of the discussion. Hence I make full-fledged assignments fairly minimal: The major assignment(s) is (are) one or two longer papers (see below).

Each week you are required to write a two- to three page reading response. I want you to be reading articles critically and carefully. See Pryor's helpful guidelines:

<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/reading.html>

Your response will have two parts: First, a *précis* of an argument from the reading. A *précis* might focus on a single article or a section of a single

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article; it might take up instead an issue or argument discussed in one or more of the articles. Either way, your précis should extract and *concisely* present the main line of argument you are interested in.

Second, your *critical thoughts* on whatever it is you singled out in your précis. Perhaps you think there's some crucial point that needs further elaboration and discussion; perhaps you have an objection; perhaps you want to propose a useful distinction that the authors neglect; and so on. Whatever your thoughts, use your précis to pinpoint a premise or inference that you have a criticism or comment about. And be as specific as possible: if you think some issue should be discussed in class, explain why, and offer your take to get the discussion going.

Place your response in your Sakai "Drop Box" by 5 a.m. Monday morning (i.e., some time Sunday night).

Everyone must do a response pretty much each week. I'll allow you to skip two. Each week I'll select a couple of responses to comment on more extensively, but even if I don't comment on yours that week, I'll still be noting whether you did one.

Response grades range from 5 (well-written and insightful), 4 (good, understands the argument, less in the way of critical insight), 3 (has the basic idea but confused), 2 (at least you submitted something), and 0 (not even a 2).

## PAPER(S)

You have two options:

1. Two shorter papers, the first five to six pages, the second seven to ten pages.
2. One twelve- to fifteen-page paper

To help you write your final paper, a report (roughly four pages) will be due in the 11th or 12th week of the semester. Think of the report as map of your intended paper; the more detailed, the better.

In my experience most students acknowledge that writing two shorter papers rather than one long one may be in their best interest, and then fail to do it nonetheless. (Hey, deadlines: I empathize.) If you are newer to philosophy and haven't written many philosophy papers you should consider *committing* to the two paper option. I'll hold you to it!

I'll talk much more about writing as the time approaches. In the meantime, you might want to look at Pryor's guidelines:

<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>.

Also consider booking time at the Writing Center:

<http://writing.pomona.edu/>

This is free feedback! Take advantage of it, even for your weekly responses.

## PRESENTATIONS

Each student will present his/her report to the class for discussion, and on the basis of the discussion the report can be revised and expanded into the term paper.

## SCHEDULE

### Week 1 – 1/27

Introduction	Plato, from <i>Republic</i> VI Descartes, from <i>Meditation</i> VI Hume, <i>Enquiry</i> §§2–3, first four paragraphs of §4, §5 part 2
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### Week 2 – 2/2

Some History <sup>3</sup>	Hume <i>Treatise</i> I.i.1–1.i.4, I.iii.5 Ryle, chapter 8 of <i>Concept of Mind</i>
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<sup>3</sup> ...the brevity of which would, no doubt, perturb Peter Thielke.

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Pretending	Harris, “Young children’s comprehension of pretend episodes” Carruthers, “Why pretend?” (Nichols ch. 6) Currie, “Why irony is pretense” (Nichols ch. 7) Currie, “Pretence, pretending, and metarepresenting”
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**Week 3 – 2/9\***

Fiction	Lewis, “Truth in fiction” Skolnick & Bloom, “The intuitive cosmology of fictional worlds” (Nichols ch. 5) Walton, from <i>Mimesis as Make-Believe</i>
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**Week 4 – 2/16**

Imaginative Resistance	Moran, “The expression of feeling in imagination” Walton, “On the (so-called) puzzle of imaginative resistance” (Nichols ch. 8) Szabó-Gendler, “Imaginative resistance revisited” (Nichols ch. 9) Weinberg & Meskin, “Puzzling over the imagination: Philosophical problems, architectural solutions” (Nichols ch. 10)
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**Week 5 – 2/23**

Emotions	Schroeder & Matheson, “Imagination and emotion” (Nichols ch. 2) Goldman, “Imagination and simulation in audience responses to fiction” (Nichols ch. 3) Friend, “How I really feel about <i>JFK</i> ”
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**Week 6 – 3/2**

Resistance and Emotions	Currie, “Desire in imagination” Dogget & Egan, “Wanting things you don’t want: the case for an imaginative analog of desire” Amy Kind, “The puzzle of imaginative desire” (manuscript) <i>Special guest: Amy Kind, CMC Philosophy!</i>
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**Week 7 – 3/9**

Berkeley’s Puzzle	Berkeley, the “Master Argument” from <i>Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous</i> Peacocke, “Imagination, experience, and possibility: A Berkeleyan view defended” Martin, “The transparency of experience” <sup>4</sup> Lopes, “Out of sight, out of mind”
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FIRST PAPER DUE  
FRIDAY MARCH 13, SIX P.M.

SPRING BREAK 3/16–3/20

**Week 8 – 3/23**

<i>Being John Malkovich</i>	Screening: <i>Being John Malkovich</i> Williams, “Imagination and the self”
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<sup>4</sup> This is a pretty hairy paper — do your best.

Reynolds, "Imagining oneself to be another"  
Smith, "Imagining from the inside"

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**Week 9 – 3/30**

Empathy and Theory of Mind      Adam Smith, *The theory of moral sentiments*, ch. 1  
Baron-Cohen, Leslie, & Frith, "Does the autistic child have a 'theory of mind'?"  
Gordon & Baker, "Autism and the 'theory of mind' debate"  
Morton, "Imagination and misimagination" (Nichols, ch. 4)  
Carruthers, "Autism as mind-blindness"

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Simulation Theory      Gallese & Goldman, "Mirror neurons and the simulation theory of mind-reading"  
Gallese, "The 'shared manifold' hypothesis: from mirror neurons to empathy"  
Gordon, "Simulation without introspection or inference from me to you"

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**Week 10 – 4/6**

Imagery      Amy Kind, "Putting the image back in imagination"  
Sorensen, "Art of the impossible"  
Currie, "Visual imagery as the simulation of vision"  
Pylyshyn, from *Seeing and visualizing*

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**Week 11 – 4/13**

Modal Epistemology      Hart, from *Engines of the Soul*  
Hill, "Modality, modal epistemology, and the metaphysics of consciousness" (Nichols, ch. 11)  
Nichols, "Imaginative blocks and impossibility" (Nichols, ch. 12)  
Sorensen, "Meta-conceivability and theory experiments" (Nichols, ch. 13)  
Shoemaker, "The first-person perspective"

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REPORT DUE  
MONDAY APRIL 20, FIVE A.M.

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**Week 12 – 4/20**

If we haven't fallen behind at the point, it'll be a miracle. If there's time, I'm looking for material on *creativity*, of which there's a weird dearth...

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**Week 13 – 4/27**

Presentations

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**Week 14 – 5/4**

Presentations

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FINAL PAPER DUE  
MONDAY MAY 11, SEVEN P.M.

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