

**Philosophy 555 – Abstraction
Syllabus**

Prof. Hayley Clatterbuck
523 Lattimore Hall
hayley.clatterbuck@rochester.edu

Prof. Alison Peterman
520 Lattimore Hall
alison.peterman@gmail.com

Meeting Time

Tuesday	2:00-4:40	531 Lattimore Hall
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Peterman Office Hours

Monday	12:00-1:00	520 Lattimore Hall
Tuesday	1:00-2:00	

Clatterbuck Office Hours

Tuesday	4:00-5:00	523 Lattimore Hall
Thursday	1:00-2:00	

Readings

All assigned and recommended readings will be posted on Blackboard.

Requirements

Your grade in this course will be determined as follows:

Final paper - 75%

Participation/ writing responses - 25%

The bulk of your grade will be determined by a final seminar paper, approximately 20 pages in length. We strongly advise that you meet with us to discuss your paper topic well before the end of the semester.

Every other week, you will be responsible for writing a short exposition of between 250 and 500 words (max). The class will be divided in half and will have responses due on alternate weeks. These should be carefully structured in the following way. First, put most of your energy into reconstructing one argument from the readings as precisely, concisely, clearly, and charitably as you possibly can. Then, raise several questions or issues concerning the argument, or one issue that you work out in a little bit of detail (say, a paragraph or two). This requirement applies to those sitting in or auditing, in addition to those enrolled.

You must email your vignettes to the class by Sunday night, to an email list that will be provided. It is the responsibility of the rest of the students (and ours) to read and digest these musings before class meets on Tuesday. Then, in class, you should expect to be asked to talk about your tractate for about five minutes, in a way that is designed to elucidate the issue you are talking about for the other students and to spark discussion. These are in lieu of class presentations, so we expect that the work you put into these 6 pressignments adds up to the work you would have done for response papers plus a full presentation.

The goals of these essays are three: to carefully reconstruct and then engage with arguments that we read, to practice explaining arguments and argument interventions in a way that is helpful to your students and to audiences at your talks, and to help to structure our discussion in an interactive way. Please keep these goals in mind as you compose your disquisitions.

Schedule of Readings

Week 1 (9/5) – Introduction to Mental Representation

Required reading: Crane, *The Mechanical Mind* Ch. 1, pp. 1-41
---- Ch. 4, pp. 130-148

Supplementary reading: Von Eckardt, “Mental Representation”, in Wilson and Keil, *MIT Encyclopedia of CS*

Assignment: none

Week 2 (9/12) – Aristotle

Required reading: Bäck, *Aristotle's Theory of Abstraction* Ch. 2

Supplementary reading: Aristotle, *De Anima*, excerpts
Aquinas, Commentary on *De Anima*, focusing on PDF page 18-29

Assignment: Group A responses due

Week 3 (9/19) – Medieval

Required reading: “Aquinas Stuff” focusing on PDF pages 22-32 and 49-57
“Duns Scotus Stuff” focusing on PDF pages 1-27
“Ockham Stuff” focusing on PDF pages 1-28

Supplementary reading: stuff that we don't say to focus on in those PDFs

Assignment: Group B responses due

Week 4 (9/26) – Locke and Berkeley

Required reading: Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Knowledge* (excerpts)
Berkeley, *Principles of Human Knowledge* Introduction, 104-105, 125-128

Supplementary reading: Port-Royal Logic on abstraction

Assignment: Group A responses due

Week 5 (10/3) – Hume

Required reading: Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature* Book I

Supplementary reading: TBD

Assignment: Group B responses due

Week 6 (10/10) – No class

Week 7 (10/17) – Hume pt. 2

Required reading: Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature* Book I cont.

Supplementary reading: none

Assignment: Group A responses due

Week 8 (10/24) – Reid

Required reading: Reid, *Inquiry* selections (1)
Reid, *Essays* “Classifying the Powers of the Mind”

Supplementary reading: Reid, *Essays* “On the Meanings of Some Words” and “On Acquired Perception”
Van Cleve, “Four Questions About Acquired Perception”
Copenhaver, “Reid on Acquired Perception”

Assignment: Group B responses due

Week 9 (10/31) – Morgan

Required reading: Morgan, *An Introduction to Comparative Psychology* Ch. 13-16, pp. 217-304
Clatterbuck, “Darwin, Hume, Morgan, and the *Vera Causae* of Psychology”

Supplementary reading: Inukai, “Hume on Relations: Are They Real?”

Assignment: Group A responses due

Week 10 (11/7) – How are they learned? Return of innateness

Required reading: Laurence and Margolis, “Abstraction and the Origin of General Ideas”
Carey, *The Origin of Concepts* Ch. 1-2, pp. 3-65
---- Ch. 13, pp. 487-502

Supplementary reading: Carey, *The Origin of Concepts* Ch. 3, pp. 65-116
Quine, “Natural Kinds”

Assignment: Group B responses due

Week 11 (11/14) – Innateness run amok

Required reading: Laurence and Margolis, “Radical Concept Nativism”

Supplementary reading: TBD

Assignment: Group A responses due

Week 12 (11/21) – Learning new concepts

Required reading: Buckner, “Scaffolding Intuitive Rationality”
Stevens, “Theoretical Terms Without Analytic Truths”
Gentner, “Bootstrapping the Mind: Analogical Processes and Symbol Systems”

Supplementary reading: Carey, *Origin of Concepts* Ch. 11-12
Rey, “Innate and Learned: Carey, Mad Dog Nativism...”
Carey, “On Learning New Primitives in the Language of Thought”

Assignment: Group B responses due

Week 13 (11/28) – Vehicles and representations

Required reading: Millikan, *On Clear and Confused Ideas* Ch. 8-9

Supplementary reading: Reid, *Essay* “Reflection on the Common Theory of Ideas”

Assignment: Group A responses due

Week 14 (12/5) – Maps and language

Required reading: Camp, “Thinking With Maps”

Supplementary reading: Rescorla, “Cognitive Maps and the Language of Thought”

Assignment: Group B responses due

Week 15 (12/12) – Imagery

Required reading: Barsalou, “Abstraction in Perceptual Symbol Systems”
Barsalou, “Perceptual Symbol Systems”

Supplementary reading: TBD

Assignment: none