

Metaphysics: The Metaphysics of Color

1. Course Overview

Colors are a basic part of our visual experience. Our visual perception of the physical world—its shape, size, etc.—is mediated by our seeing that world in color. Yet the nature of colors themselves is deeply mysterious. Are they simply wavelengths of light? If so, then objects aren't really colored and we would appear to be regularly misled by our visual experience. Perhaps then colors are propensities to reflect light. But this cannot account for things like colored lights or rainbows or the color of the sky. Perhaps they are some massive disjunct of reflectance properties, emissions properties, and diffraction properties. But then what unifies this disjunct, so as to make just these properties the colors? In other words, is there rhyme or reason to be found in this disjunct? These are the basic questions we will be asking over the course of the semester. In the process of trying to answer them, we will introduce a number of important metaphysical distinctions: realism and anti-realism, relational and non-relational properties, and primitive as opposed to non-primitive properties. In addition, we will grapple with the question of what role science can play in philosophical debates about the mind and world, and whether common sense serves as a help or a hinderance in helping us in making sense of the complex philosophical terrain of metaphysics.

2. Requirements

Students who take this course must be prepared to complete readings on time, as lectures will assume that students have read that week's texts closely. Students are expected to have their texts with them at each class, and students may be called upon at random to discuss or explain parts of the week's readings.

3. Prerequisites

This class assumes a basic familiarity with deductive logic and at least some philosophical training at the intermediate level. If you have any questions about whether you are adequately prepared for the course, please come talk to me.

4. Course Format

There will be two lectures per week, at a very reasonable hour on Tuesday and Thursday. A strong emphasis will be placed on student participation.

5. Assessment

The final marks for this course will be determined in the following way:

- Summaries of readings (10 total, 1 page each, 1% each): 10%.
- Draft of final paper: 20%

- Comments on other students' drafts: 20%
- Final Paper (3000–3500 words): 50%.

N.B. Hard copies of the summaries and final paper should be turned in to the box labeled 'Postdocs' in the philosophy department office. Drafts of the final paper and comments on peers' papers should be sent to the email address listed at the top of this syllabus.

Students may select up to ten of the readings to summarize in roughly one page. Assessment of these summaries will be on a credit/no credit basis. Summaries are due before the first class meeting of the relevant week.

Students will complete a draft version of the final paper roughly two weeks before the end of the quarter, which will then be blinded and distributed to 2–3 other students for review. Students will be assessed in part based on the quality of the comments they provide.

6. Attendance

Attendance is not mandatory. It is, however, highly recommended. Attendance is the student's responsibility, and missed materials should be obtained from the other students.

7. Late Policy for Essays

The final paper is due to my mailbox by 5pm on 4/10. A week-long grace period begins at that point, during which students may submit late papers with no penalty. After 5pm on 4/17, 5% will be deducted from the essay's mark. For each additional calendar day (starting at midnight), an additional 5% will be deducted from the paper grade. No excuses will be accepted, save for documented illnesses. Drafts and summaries may not be turned in late.

N.B. Extensions may be granted at the discretion of the instructor IN ADVANCE of the due date. I do not check my email in the evening, let alone late at night. So again, plan ahead.

8. Electronics and Laptop Policy

Pursuant to McGill University's policy regarding electronics in the classroom, students may not use electronic devices (phones, iPads, etc.) or laptop computers during class. All electronic devices must be turned off and stored during the lecture period. Exceptions will only be made with a note from the student disabilities office. **THE RECORDING OF LECTURES IS STRICTLY FORBIDDEN** and is illegal without the consent of the instructor. Please consider these policies before enrolling for this course.

9. Course Communications

It is assumed that all students are attending all lectures, and therefore some essential information may be transmitted in lecture. In particular, revisions to the reading schedule will be transmitted in class and not necessarily be made available in any other way. Students who do not attend and therefore have not prepared properly may not use non-attendance for any reason as an excuse. Information about the course and some readings and handouts

may be made available on MyCourses. Students are responsible for checking each Saturday for information or updates. The principal means of contact for this course, outside of office hours and the classroom is email. All emails to the instructor must originate from McGill University accounts, and some course communications may be sent via email to McGill University accounts. Students are responsible for checking their McGill accounts.

10. Academic Integrity

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offenses under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/integrity for more information).

L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l'honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site www.mcgill.ca/integrity).

11. Special Notes

In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.

and

In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

12. Required Texts

Readings in the Philosophy of Color, Volume 1, Second Edition (Byrne and Hilbert), *The Red and the Real* (Cohen)

The texts can be purchased at Paragraphe Booksellers on Avenue McGill College.

13. Schedule of Topics

N.B. Readings given under a particular week are the readings that apply to that week of classes. Students are expected to have completed the readings before the relevant Tuesday class. The readings will generally be discussed in the order listed, but it will sometimes prove helpful to discuss them in tandem. Emphasis on this course will be placed on careful reading of the course material, and as such we may progress more slowly than this schedule of topics suggests. Please check MyCourses weekly on Fridays for changes to the assigned readings.

Week 1 (1/7 & 1/9) Physicalism I

- Hardin, “Color and Illusion”
- Akins and Hahn, “The Peculiarity of Colour”

Week 2 (1/14 & 1/16) Physicalism II

- Smart, “On Some Criticisms of a Physicalist Theory of Colors”*
- Boghossian and Velleman, “Physicalist Theories of Color”*
- Byrne and Hilbert, “Colors and Reflectances”*

Week 3 (1/21 & 1/23) Physicalism III

- Lewis, “Naming the Colors”
- Byrne and Hilbert, “Color Realism and Color Science”
- Chirimuuta, “Reflectance Realism and Colour Constancy: What Would Count as Scientific Evidence for Hilbert’s Ontology of Colour?”

Week 4 (1/28 & 1/30) Dispositionalism I

- Boghossian and Velleman, “Color as a Secondary Quality” *
- Peacocke, “Colour Concepts and Colour Experience”*

Week 5 (2/6) Dispositionalism II

- Johnston, “How to Speak of the Colors”*
- McGinn, “Another Look At Color”
- N.B. Class canceled on 2/4.

Week 6 (2/13 & 2/15) Dispositionalism III/Functionalism I

- Levin, “Dispositional Theories of Color and the Claims of Common Sense”
- McLaughlin, “The Place of Color in Nature”

Week 7 (2/20 & 2/27) Functionalism II

- Jackson and Pargetter, “An Objectivist’s Guide to Subjectivism About Colour”
- Cohen “Color: A Functionalist Proposal”

Week 8 (2/20 & 2/22) Selectionalism & Pluralism

- Matthen, “The Disunity of Color”
- Mizrahi, “Color Objectivism and Color Pluralism”
- Kalderon, “Color Pluralism”

Week 9 (3/4 & 3/6): Eliminativism

- Hardin, *Color For Philosophers*, chapter 2
- Chalmers, “Perception and the Fall From Eden”
- Pautz, “Color Eliminativism”

Week 10 (3/11 & 3/13): Relationalism I

- Cohen, *The Red and the Real*, chapters 1–4

Week 11 (3/18 & 3/20): Relationalism II

- Pautz, “Review of Cohen’s *The Red and the Real*”
- Adams and Michaelson, “Keeping it Real”
- Class visit from Jonathan Cohen on 3/18

Week 12 (3/25 & 3/27): Primitivism

- Byrne and Hilbert, “Color Primitivism”
- Campbell, “A Simple View of Colour”*
- Yablo, “Singling Out Properties”
- Drafts of final papers due 3/27

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Winter 2014/3 Credits
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Week 13 (4/1 & 4/3): Constancy

- Thompson, “Colour Constancy and Russellian Representationalism”
- Cohen, “Color Constancy as Counterfactual”
- Hilbert, “Color Constancy and the Complexity of Color”
- Comments on other students’ drafts due 4/3

Week 14 (4/8 & 4/10): Genealogy

- Adams, *On the Genealogy of Color*, chapters 1 and 2
- Class visit from Zed Adams on 4/8
- Final papers due 4/10

* = in *Readings in the Philosophy of Color*, Volume 1