

The Imagination

Graduate seminar

Sample syllabus

CONTACT DETAILS AND OFFICE HOURS HERE

1 Introduction

Imagining and the imaginary are as much a part of our mental lives as thinking and perceiving. Further, a variety of philosophical questions appear to involve imagination in some capacity. For example, several philosophers think that the appreciation of art requires the imagination, and many think the same about knowledge of possibilities. But what imagination is, what it is like, and what it can do remain contentious questions. We will start by considering several general theories of imagination: what it is, how it works, how it is related to perception and belief. We will then examine a number of applications of imagination. The schedule is open to amendment depending on students' preferences and interests.

2 Schedule and readings

Week	Topic	Reading
Week 1	Course introduction	Sartre, 'The Imaginary', part 1 ch. 1.
Week 2	Collingwood's view	Collingwood, 'The Principles of Art', book II.
Week 3	The pretense view	Langland-Hassan, 'Pretense, Imagination and Belief'.
Week 4	The image view	Kind, 'Putting the Image Back in Imagination'.
Week 5	The dependency view	Martin, 'The Transparency of Experience'.
Week 6	Mind-reading	Currie and Ravenscroft, 'Recreative Minds' (excerpt).
Week 7	Beliefs, desires	Schellenberg, 'Belief and Desire in Imagination...'
Week 8	Modal epistemology	Kung, 'Imagination as a Guide to Possibility'.
Week 9	Knowledge and discovery	Spaulding, 'Imagination Through Knowledge'.
Week 10	The limits of imagination	Gendler, 'The Puzzle of Imaginative Resistance'.
Week 11	Imagination and emotion	Moran, 'The Expression of Emotion in Imagination'.
Week 12	Aesthetic appreciation	Walton, 'Mimesis as Make-Believe' (excerpt).
Week 13	Student presentations of draft essays	
Week 14	Student presentations of draft essays	

3 Assessment and Grading

Your assessment will consist of the following pieces of work:

- Three short response papers (about 1000 words) (10% each)
- One presentation (10%)
- One final essay (about 5000 words) (60%)

Your response papers should constitute critical analysis of and engagement with a piece of our reading. Your final essay should engage critically with one issue discussed in the course or related to course material. It is anticipated that one of your response papers will form the basis of your final essay, but this need not be the case if you so choose.

You will give two presentations in this class. You will present one of the assigned readings; this presentation will constitute 10% of your grade. Your other presentation, which will be unassessed, will be of a draft of your final paper.

Deadlines

All three of your response papers must be submitted by the end of week 12. Your final essay must be submitted by the end of the semester. We will schedule presentations at the start of the semester.

4 Aims and Objectives

Aims

This course aims to:

- thoroughly acquaint students with contemporary work on the imagination;
- provide students with a clear understanding of the history, context, and background of this work;
- cover a reasonable range of philosophical approaches and traditions;
- help students to develop their core philosophical skills;
- help students to develop their own views on issues concerning imagination.

Objectives

By the end of this course, students should:

- be able to understand and discuss the central issues of the course;
- be able to critically assess the views of various philosophers on these issues;
- be able to articulate and defend their own views;
- have produced a substantial essay demonstrating engagement with a philosophical problem at an appropriate level of sophistication.

5 Policies

POLICIES GO HERE, E.G. DISABILITY ACCOMMODATION, ACADEMIC HONESTY, ELECTRONIC DEVICES