

PHIL-590S: SPECIAL FIELDS SEMINAR

August 1, 2017

Instructor Professor Karen Neander & Professor Carlotta Pavese.

Main Lecture Time M 03:05 PM-05:35 PM

Main Lecture Location West Duke Building 204, East Campus.

Professor's Email carlotta.pavese@duke.edu

Office West Duke Building, Philosophy department, room 201I.

Office Hours Monday 1-3pm (before class).

Website There will be a Sakai site for the course.

Course Description How does the mind represent the world? This is among the deepest philosophical puzzles, one that goes under several names, such as “the problem of mental content,” “Brentano’s problem,” or “the problem of intentionality.” The real mystery relies on how it could possibly be that neurobiological states can have semantic properties such as meaning or reference: how it is that neurobiological states can be *about* something else. In this seminar, we will read closely and discuss a novel attempt to tackle the problem of intentionality, by Duke Professor Karen Neander, in her new book *A Mark of the Mental*. Here, Professor Karen Neander develops and defends a naturalistic account for sensory-perceptual (nonconceptual) representations. After developing an argument for teleosemantics by examining the nature of explanation in the mind and brain sciences, Neander develops a theory of mental content and defends it against six main content-determinacy challenges to a naturalized semantics. In the course of reading Neander’s book, we will discuss central problems in the philosophy of representation and content, such as the distinction between information and representation; between original intentionality and derived intentionality; the nature of nonconceptual content and the arguments for positing it; the distinction between similarity-based representation and representation that is not based on similarity, and that between perceptual representation and linguistic representation. In the final part of the seminar, we will discuss whether Neander’s argument for a teleosemantic approach to nonconceptual representation can be extended to conceptual representation.

Textbook and Readings

Mandatory:

Neander, Karen *A Mark of the Mental* MIT press, 2017.

Other Readings: All the other readings will be available electronically on Sakai. The readings are divided into four kinds: *Main Readings*, *Background Readings*, *Auxiliary Readings*, *Optional Readings*. Both main readings and auxiliary readings are mandatory. The auxiliary readings are those among which students should choose when deciding what to do their two presentations over the course of the semester. These readings often directly touch on Professor Neander's discussion and we will explicitly discuss them in class. Because of that, you should print these out and bring them to class. The background readings are meant to help you follow the material in Professor Neander's book. They are not mandatory but they are highly recommended, especially if you do not have much of a background in the philosophy of mind. Optional readings are truly optional: they are given to you in case you are intrigued by the topic and want to know more. You might want to look at the optional readings when deciding the topic for your final paper.

Advice on Reading: It is more important to reach a basic grasp of the overall point of a reading than to understand any particular detail. Accordingly, I advise you to do each of the readings once quickly in a single sitting and then return to the details you missed. If, on a second reading, you can't sort out some specific detail, write down what you don't understand and bring it to class for discussion. Do your best to raise your question at a point in the class where that detail is relevant to what's being discussed. It is much more likely that you will get a satisfying answer if you ask your question at the appropriate time. In all the readings, it will be helpful to ask yourself 'what is the problem or issue at stake here?' and then 'what solutions or positions is the author arguing for here?'

Grading:

Exam 30% of the final grade: Midterm, on October 2.

Presentations 10% Students are expected to do two presentations during the course of the semester, about two of the readings, and a final presentation about their paper topics (on December 4).

Outline Essay 10% Students are expected to submit an outline of their final essay by November 13. The outline should sketch the sort of argument to be developed in the final paper in no more than 1000 words.

Essay 50% of the final grade. 1 essay, 12–15 pages. Deadline (very strict) for submission: December 24 2017.

Academic Integrity Students that are found faulty of plagiarism in any single one of the above assignments will be given an F in the class (and consequently will fail the class).

Policy on Absences: Students are expected to attend all classes. Please note: My policy for missed classes and missed exams is the following. If you miss an exam and want to make it up, you will need an official excuse of your absence. In all but the most extreme cases, you will be required to make up the missed exam within 10 days. You've got up to *two* excused absences during the semester.

The religious holidays page on the T-Reqs website communicates to students the policy and procedures to be followed if they will miss class due to **observation of a religious holiday**: <http://trinity.duke.edu/undergraduate/academic-policies/religious-holidays>. The procedure includes the submission of a Religious Observance Notification Form to their instructor. Students who miss class to observe a specified religious holiday are expected to make prior arrangements with their instructor to make up any work missed.

(Provisional) Schedule

The following schedule is only provisional and most likely subject to changes as we go on.

1st week Monday *When:* 28th August.

Main Reading: Neander (2017) Chapter 1 "Thinking about Thought."

Auxiliary Readings: Chapter 3 of Dretske, F. (1991) "Explaining Behavior. Reasons in a world of causes." MIT press.

Background Readings:

- Jacob, P. (2014) "Intentionality", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Edward N. Zalta (ed.),
URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2014/entries/intentionality/>>.
- Neander, K. (2010) "Teleological theories of mental content." Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy.
URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/content-teleological/>>.
- Shea, N. (2013) "Naturalising representational content." *Philosophy Compass* 8.5: 496-509.

Optional Readings:

- Chapter 1 of Stalnaker, R. (1987) *Inquiry*, "The Problem of Intentionality".
- Grice, P. (1957) "Meaning." *The Philosophical Review* 66 (3): 377-388.
- Chapter 2 of Cummings, R. (1996). *Representations, Targets and Attitudes*, Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.
- Field, H. (1978) "Mental representation." *Erkenntnis* 13.1: 9-61.

Topics: Introduction to the problem of intentionality and to teleosemantics, to the distinctions between information and representation, between original intentionality versus derived intentionality, between semantics and meta-semantics.

2nd week Monday *When:* 4th September.

Main Reading: Neander (2017): Chapter 2. "Positing Non-Conceptual Representations."

Auxiliary Readings:

- Peacocke, C. (2001) "Does perception have a nonconceptual content?" *The Journal of Philosophy* 98.5: 239-264;
- Heck, R. G. (2000) "Nonconceptual content and the "space of reasons"." *The Philosophical Review* 109.4: 483-523.

Background readings:

- Bermdez, J. and Arnon C. (2015) Nonconceptual mental content. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, ed. Edward N. Zalta.
URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2015/entries/content-nonconceptual>>.
- Toribio, J. (2007) "Nonconceptual content." *Philosophy Compass* 2.3: 445-460.

Optional Readings:

- Selection of Evans, G. and McDowell, J. (1982) *The varieties of reference*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Stalnaker, R. (1998) "What might nonconceptual content be?" *Philosophical Issues* 9: 339-352.

Topics: Non-conceptual versus conceptual content; arguments for and against nonconceptual content, perceptual representation versus linguistic representation.

3rd week Monday *When:* 11th September.

Main Reading: Neander (2017): Chapter 3 "Functional Analysis and the Species Design."

Auxiliary Readings

- Papineau, D. (2001) "The status of teleosemantics, or how to stop worrying about Swampman." *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 79 (2): 279–289.
- Dennett, D. (1988) "Evolution, Error and Intentionality," in Y. Wilks and D. Partidge (eds.), *Sourcebook on the Foundations of Artificial Intelligence*, New Mexico University Press: New Mexico.

Background Readings

- Wright, L., (1973) "Functions," in *The Philosophical Review*, 82: 139–168;
- Cummins, R. (1975) "Functional Analysis." *The Journal of Philosophy* 72, no. 20: 741–65;
- Neander, K. (1991) "The teleological notion of 'function.'" *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 69.4: 454–468.
- Millikan, R. (1989b) "In Defense of Proper Functions." *Philosophy of Science* 56 (2): 288–302;

Optional Readings

- Nanay, B. (2010) "A Modal Theory of Function." *The Journal of Philosophy* 107.8: 412–431;
- Neander, K. and Rosenberg, A. (2012). "Solving the Circularity Problem for Functions." *Journal of Philosophy* 109 (10): 613–622.
- Neander, K. (1996a). "Swampman meets swampcow." *Mind Language* 11 (1): 70–130.

Topic: Functions and Functional Analysis; Objections to Teleosemantics: Dennett's indeterminacy objection to teleosemantics; The Swampman objection.

Monday *When:* 18th September.

Readings: Neander (2017), Chapter 4 "The Methodological Argument for Informational Teleosemantics."

Auxiliary readings:

- Dretske, F. (1986) "Misrepresentation." In *Belief: Form, Content and Function*, New York, ed. Radu Bogdan, 17–36. Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press.
- Introduction, Chapters 1-2 of Fodor, J. (1987) *Psychosemantics: The Problem of Meaning in the Philosophy of Mind*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Background Readings

- Neander, K. (2010) "Teleological theories of mental content." *Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy*.
URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/content-teleological/>>.
- Stampe, D. (1977) "Toward a causal theory of linguistic representation." In *Midwest Studies in Philosophy: Studies in the Philosophy of Language*. vol. 2., ed. Peter A. French, Theodore E. Uehling Jr., and Howard K. Wettstein, 81–102. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press;

Optional Reading

- Fodor, J. A. (1991) "A Modal Argument for Narrow Content." *The Journal of Philosophy* 88, no. 1: 5-26.
- Neander, K. (1995) "Malfunctioning and Misrepresenting," in *Philosophical Studies*, 79: 109–141.

Topics: The explanatory power of positing representation; a comparison between teleosemantics and other naturalized theories of content; Fodor's (1987, 1991) asymmetric-dependency theory's as a version of teleosemantics.

Monday *When:* 25th September.

Main Reading: Neander (2017) chapter 5: "Simple Minds."

Auxiliary Readings:

- Chapter 3 and 4 of Fodor J. A (1990). *A theory of content and other essays*. MIT press.
- Millikan, R. (1991) "Speaking up for Darwin." In *Meaning in Mind: Fodor and his Critics*, ed. Barry Loewer and Georges Rey, 151–165. Cambridge; MA: Blackwell;

Topic: Perceptual representation and content for simple systems.

Monday *When:* 2nd October.

Readings: No new reading.

Topic: Midterm.

Monday *When:* 9th October

No class, Fall break.

Monday *When:* 16th October.

Main Reading: Neander (2017) Chapter 6 “Response Functions.”

Auxiliary Readings

- Millikan, R. (1989) “Biosemantics.” *Journal of Philosophy* 86: 281–297;
- Pietroski, P. (1992) “Intentional and teleological error.” *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 73: 267–281.

Background Readings

- Chapter 3 of Dretske, F. (1981) *Knowledge and the Flow of Information*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press

Optional Reading

- Shea, N. (2007). “Consumers need information: Supplementing teleosemantics with an input condition.” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 75 (2): 404–435.

Topic: A comparison between teleosemantic accounts of content. Effects versus causes in teleosemantics. Millikan’s biosemantics; Pietroski’s and Neander’s criticisms.

Monday *When:* 23rd October

Main Reading: Neander (2017) chapter 7 “Content-Determinacy Challenges”

Auxiliary Readings

- Papineau, D. (1998) “Teleosemantics and indeterminacy.” *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 76: 1–14;

Background Readings

- Dennett, D. (1988) “Evolution, Error and Intentionality,” in Y. Wilks and D. Partidge (eds.), *Sourcebook on the Foundations of Artificial Intelligence*, New Mexico University Press: New Mexico.
- Fodor, J. (1990b). “Information and representation.” In *Information, Language and Cognition*, ed. Philip Hanson. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.

Topic: Overcoming Content-Determinacy Challenges.

Monday When: 30th October

Main Readings: Neander (2017) chapter 8 “Causally Driven Analogs” & 9 “Distant and Distal Red Squares.”

Auxiliary Readings

- (for chapter 8) Chapter 4 of Gallistel, C., and King, A. (2009). *Memory and the Computational Brain: Why Cognitive Science Will Transform Neuroscience*, vol. 3. Malden, MA: Wiley;
- (for chapter 8) Shea, N. (2014). “VI-Exploitable isomorphism and structural representation.” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 114.
- (for chapter 9) Schulte P. (forthcoming) “Perceiving the World Outside: How to Solve the Distality Problem for Informational Teleosemantics?” in *Philosophical Quarterly*.

Background Readings

- Neander, K. (1987). “Pictorial representation: A matter of resemblance.” *British Journal of Aesthetics* 27 (3): 213-226;
- Chapter 7-8 of Cummings, R. (1996). *Representations, Targets and Attitudes*, Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.

Optional Reading

- Shea, N. (2013). “Millikan’s isomorphism requirement. In Millikan and Her Critics,” ed. Dan Ryder, Justine Kingsbury, and Kenneth Williford, 63-80. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Topic: Similarity-based content versus non-similarity-based content; pictorial representation and map-representation; the problem of distal content.

Monday When: 6th November.

Main Reading: Chapter 1 (Concepts and Cognitive Science) of Laurence and Margolis (1999) *Concepts: core readings*, Cambridge, Mass. : MIT Press.

Auxiliary Readings

- Lectures 1 and 2 of Kripke, S (1972) *Naming and necessity*. Semantics of natural language. Springer Netherlands, 253-355.
- Prinz, J. (2005) “The return of concept empiricism.” *Handbook of categorization in cognitive science*: 679-699.

Topics: Concepts in philosophy and cognitive science. Whether non-conceptual content can ground conceptual content. Extending teleosemantics to conceptual content.

Monday When: 13th November

Main Reading: Devitt, M and Porot, N. “Testing usage and intuitions,” manuscript.

Auxiliary Readings

- Devitt, M. (2012) "Should proper names still seem so problematic." *New Essays on Reference*.
- Devitt, M. (2015) "Testing theories of reference." *Advances in experimental philosophy of language*: 31-63.

Background Readings

- Machery, E. Mallon, R., Nichols, S., and Stich, S. (2004), "Semantics, cross-cultural style?" *Cognition*, 92, B1-B12;
- Machery, E. Mallon, R. Nichols, S. and Stich, S. (2013), "If folk intuitions vary, then what?" *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 86: 618-35.

Topic: Michael Devitt's visit. Descriptivism versus direct referentialism. Semantics of proper names, of kind concepts and methodology.

Monday *When*: 20th November

(no class, Thanksgiving week)

Monday *When*: 27th November,

Class postponed to the 4th.

Monday *When*: 4th December

Readings: No new readings.

Topic: Students' presentations of paper projects.