

PHIL 76600: Memory

Course Description

The topic of memory has not been as popular among philosophers of mind and psychology as topics like: perception, concept, belief, emotion, and consciousness. But the philosophical problems and puzzles surrounding memory are at least as compelling as those involving these other mental constructs. In the past decade or so, there has been an uptick in philosophical interest in “episodic memory”: the capacity to retain information from experiences pertaining to events that occurred in one’s own personal past. This interest has been fueled by a body of empirical evidence that points to memory’s constructive nature and its proneness to being distorted or its tendency to incorporate information that derives from other sources. This raises philosophical questions about the very nature of episodic memories: must they be causally connected with past experience, and are they true by definition (is the verb ‘remember’ factive)? It also raises questions about the dividing line between memory and imagination, to the point that some philosophers, psychologists, and neuroscientists have argued for rejecting the distinction altogether, lumping them together as forms of “mental time travel.” Can we maintain that memory is a distinct capacity in the face of this challenge? If so, what individuates it? Moreover, can we be assured that it is a reliable source of knowledge about the past? Is the function of memory to provide such knowledge, or to strengthen social ties, to enhance self-understanding, harbor grudges, reduce boredom, reminisce about dead loved ones, teach lessons to young people, cope with thoughts of mortality, or foster our sense of personal identity? Finally, does episodic memory have a distinctive phenomenology, and is that part of its functional profile?

Course Requirements

Two presentations (20%): You will be asked to give two presentations. The first presentation will be on one of the readings in the course schedule. You should choose a few articles that you’re especially interested in after the first session and I’ll make an effort to see that everyone gets one of their top choices, with presentations starting in the second or third session. These presentations are supposed to be short (10-minute) overviews of the readings that launch us into a discussion, rather than attempts to give a comprehensive account of the readings. In the final session of the course, we will have a condensed mini-conference based on your term papers. You’ll give a very short presentation (4-5 minutes!) on your term paper, followed by a lightning round Q&A. I realize that this is too quick to get high-quality feedback, but it can be a good exercise to try to summarize your main argument very briefly and to respond to immediate feedback from colleagues.

Short response papers (20%): You will be expected to submit 10 reading responses (200-300 words) on each one of 10 readings covered in class, after the reading has been discussed in class. These responses will be due 48 hours after class (by 5 pm on Wednesday) and each will develop a point in one the readings, or raise an objection, or otherwise meaningfully engage with the reading in question. Your response can be based on issues discussed in class but should go beyond class discussion in some way. These response papers cannot be submitted late unless there are documented extenuating circumstances.

Draft term paper (20%): Around halfway into the semester, I’ll distribute some essay topics and will also invite you to come up with essay topics of your own. Once we’ve mutually agreed on a topic, you’ll have

around two weeks to submit a short paper (roughly 2500-3000 words) on that topic. This will be a first draft of your term paper for the course.

Revised term paper (40%): At least two weeks before the end of the semester, I'll return your draft paper with comments and suggestions for development. You will then revise it and expand it into a term paper for the course (roughly 5000-6000 words), which will be due at the end of the semester.

Course Schedule

Week 1 (February 1). Introduction

Schacter, D. L. (1995). Review: Memory Wars. *Scientific American*, 272(4), 135-139.

Murphy, G., Loftus, E. F., Grady, R. H., Levine, L. J., & Greene, C. M. (2019). False memories for fake news during Ireland's abortion referendum. *Psychological Science*, 30(10), 1449-1459.

Week 2 (February 8). What Is Episodic Memory?

Tulving, E. (1972). Episodic and semantic memory. In E. Tulving and W. Donaldson (Eds.), *Organization of Memory*. New York: Academic Press, 381-402.

Martin, C. B., & Deutscher, M. (1966). Remembering. *The Philosophical Review*, 75(2), 161-196.

February 15. No Class – Presidents' Day

Week 3 (February 22). The Causal Theory Revis(it)ed

Michaelian, K. (2011). Generative memory. *Philosophical Psychology*, 24(3), 323-342. [Alice]

Robins, S. (2016). Representing the past: Memory traces and the causal theory of memory. *Philosophical Studies*, 173(11), 2993-3013.

Week 4 (March 1). Memory Traces and Engrams

De Brigard, F. (2014). The nature of memory traces. *Philosophy Compass*. 9(6), 402-414.

Robins, S. (2017). Memory traces. In Bernecker, S., & Michaelian, K. (Eds.). *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Memory*. Routledge. [Eleni]

Chadwick, M. J., Hassabis, D., Weiskopf, N., & Maguire, E. A. (2010). Decoding individual episodic memory traces in the human hippocampus. *Current Biology*, 20(6), 544-547.

Weeks 5 (March 8). Memory Errors and Amnesia (1)

Roediger, H. L., & McDermott, K. B. (1995). Creating false memories: Remembering words not presented in lists. *Journal of experimental psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition*, 21(4), 803-814. [Brian]

Loftus, E. F., & Pickrell, J. E. (1995). The formation of false memories. *Psychiatric Annals*, 25(12), 720-725.

Robins, S. K. (2016). Misremembering. *Philosophical Psychology*, 29(3), 432-447. [Ekin]

Week 6 (March 15). Memory Errors and Amnesia (2)

Tulving, E., Schacter, D. L., McLachlan, D. R., & Moscovitch, M. (1988). Priming of semantic autobiographical knowledge: a case study of retrograde amnesia. *Brain and Cognition*, 8(1), 3-20. [Kaci]

Tulving, E. (2002). Episodic memory: from mind to brain. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 53(1), 1-25. [Raj]

Week 7 (March 22). Memory, Imagination, and Simulation

Debus, D. (2016). Imagination and Memory. In A. Kind (Ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Imagination* (p.135-148). New York: Routledge. [Sydney]

Addis, D. R. (2018). Are episodic memories special? On the sameness of remembered and imagined event simulation. *Journal of the Royal Society of New Zealand*, 48(2-3), 64-88.

March 29: No Class – Spring Recess

Week 8 (April 5). Function(s) of Memory (1)

Boyer P. (2009). What are memories for? Functions of recall in cognition and culture. In: Boyer P, Wertsch JV, eds. *Memory in Mind and Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 3–28. [Joseph]

Klein, S. B. (2015). What Memory Is. *WIREs Cognitive Science*, 6, 1–38.

Week 9 (April 12). Function(s) of Memory (2)

De Brigard, F. (2014). Is memory for remembering? Recollection as a form of episodic hypothetical thinking. *Synthese*, 191(2), 155-185. [Adam]

Harris, C. B., Rasmussen, A. S., & Berntsen, D. (2014). The functions of autobiographical memory: An integrative approach. *Memory*, 22(5), 559-581. [Jenna]

Week 10 (April 19). Memory and Autothetic Consciousness

Hoerl, C. (2001). The phenomenology of episodic recall. In C. Hoerl and T. McCormack (eds.), *Time and memory: Issues in philosophy and psychology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 315-338. [Neil]

Boyle, A. (2020). The impure phenomenology of episodic memory. *Mind & Language*, 35(5), 641-660.

Week 11 (April 26). Collective and Transactive Memory

Barnier, A. J., Sutton, J., Harris, C. B., & Wilson, R. A. (2008). A conceptual and empirical framework for the social distribution of cognition: The case of memory. *Cognitive Systems Research*, 9(1-2), 33-51. [Dax]

Huebner, B. (2016). Transactive memory reconstructed: Rethinking Wegner's research program. *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, 54 (1), 48-69.

Week 12 (May 3). Memory and Knowledge

Lackey, J. (2005). Memory as a Generative Epistemic Source. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 70(3), 636–658. [Sean]

Michaelian, K. (2011). The epistemology of forgetting. *Erkenntnis*, 74(3), 399-424.

Week 13 (May 10). Memory and Personal Identity

Schechtman, M. (1994). The truth about memory. *Philosophical Psychology*, 7(1), 3-18. [Casey]

Klein, S. B., & Nichols, S. (2012). Memory and the sense of personal identity. *Mind*, 121(483), 677-702.

Week 14 (May 17). Mini-Conference: Presentations on Term Papers

As indicated under Course Requirements, you will each be asked to give a short (4-5 minute) presentation on your term paper, which will be followed by a very short (2 minute) Q&A.