

PHIL 877 – Topics in Philosophy of Mind: Memory
Fall 2018
Wescoc 3097
Thursdays 3:00-4:50

Dr. Sarah Robins
3072 Wescoc Hall
skrobins@ku.edu

Office Hours:
Tuesdays and Thursdays 10:30-11:30
and by appointment

Course Texts:

There are no required texts for this course. All readings will be made available on Blackboard. Many readings will be drawn from *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Memory* (Bernecker & Michaelian, eds.), Routledge: 2017 and *New Directions in the Philosophy of Memory* (Michaelian, Debus, & Perrin, eds.), Routledge: 2018, which I would encourage you to consider purchasing if you are interested in further research in this area.

Course Description

Memory is a fundamental cognitive capacity, and as such, many philosophers from a range of traditions have offered theories of memory and have recruited memory to address puzzles that arise in discussing other philosophical questions (e.g., personal identity, knowledge, moral responsibility). Nonetheless, it is only recently—in the last ten years or so—that memory has become a sustained topic of investigation in the way that other mental capacities, like imagination and perception, have been. In the short time it has been active, however, the philosophy of memory has grown rapidly. This seminar will focus on contemporary work in the philosophy of memory, which is centered primarily on issues that arise in the philosophy of mind and epistemology. Where there's time and student interest, we will make connections to historical treatments of memory and memory's connection to other areas of philosophy, such as metaphysics, philosophy of science, and ethics.

We will begin with a survey of current theories of memory, focusing on debates between the predominant causal theory of memory and post-causal views, like simulationism, constructivism, and functionalism. With this framework in place, we will then move on to a discussion of related issues regarding mental content, the role of affect, memory errors, and the role of self, consciousness, and an understanding of time in the act of remembering. Next, we'll turn to epistemological issues that arise from the recent active reconsideration of whether memory can serve as a capacity for preserving knowledge. Exploring the range of positions that have been articulated on this issue will then lead us to a discussion of the social and ethical dimensions of memory.

Given that the philosophy of memory is a relatively small and recent subfield, students will not be expected to have any familiarity with these issues and readings prior to the seminar (although prior coursework and reading in epistemology and/or philosophy of mind will likely prove useful).

Grading:

Participation: 25%

Reading Responses: 30%

Research Paper: 45%

Class Presentation: 10%

Draft: 5%

Final Submission: 30%

Grading details and criteria are explained below.

Participation: 25%

This is a graduate-level course. I take it as a given that you will not only come to class, but that you will do the reading for each class and arrive prepared to be an active participant. This need not always (or ever) mean talking a lot; don't confuse quantity and quality. Aim for *conversation*: ask questions, listen actively to others, note points of intersection with previous readings and discussions, respectfully challenge claims, and try out arguments. I will provide periodic feedback on class participation throughout the term. Anyone curious or concerned about the status of their participation grade at any point in the term should contact me.

Reading Responses: 30% (10 @ 3% each)

For each seminar meeting, you are required to bring with you a reading response. These responses are meant to give you a change to engage with the course readings prior to our discussion.

Responses should be typed, and should be somewhere between **500-1000 words**. There are 11 course meetings where responses could be submitted; only 10 will be graded. Responses are due *in class*; no late responses will be accepted.

Use these responses to 1) develop and demonstrate your understanding of the readings, and 2) initiate your evaluation of the readings. For 1), you can focus on a single reading or even on a particular section in a reading, or address the topic that covers several of the readings. For 2), you can pose a discussion question, challenge an example, critique an argument, raise an objection, or explore an interesting implication. A response can be used as the basis for your research paper.

Research Paper (45%)

The major assignment of this course is a research paper on the topic of your choosing (within reason: it must correspond to the topics addressed in this seminar). Your paper should be an argumentative essay: An argumentative essay requires defending a thesis and producing arguments both for and against that thesis. The aim is to develop a paper on par with those we have been reading throughout the term (fully polished, published work takes longer than a semester to produce—but you should see your term paper as an important step in possible pursuit of this aim). Papers should be seminar length: 4000-6500 words in length (approximately 15-25 pages, if 12 pt. double spaced).

Presentation (10%)

Our final seminar meeting on **December 6** will be devoted to individual presentations of your paper's central argument. Each student will have 10 minutes to review his or her thesis and argument for the class, followed by 5 minutes of discussion. The presentation (and activate feedback on other presentations) is worth 10% of your overall grade for this research paper.

Draft (5%)

You are required to submit a draft of your research paper to by our final class meeting on **December 6th**. This must be a complete draft (full sentences, clear thesis, identifiable argument, near or at full length). The draft is worth 5% of your overall grade for this research paper.

Final Draft (30%)

I will return your paper drafts by **Monday, December 10th**. Incorporation of the feedback received from me, and from other seminar participants during your presentation, is expected. Failure to engage with this feedback will have a significant negative impact on your overall grade. The final draft of your research paper is due at the end of finals week: **Friday, December 14th at 5PM.**

Course Schedule**Week 1 (8/23): Course Introduction and Overview of Philosophy of Memory***Required reading:*

SEP article on “Memory” by John Sutton and Kourken Michaelian
<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/memory/>

Week 2 (8/30): The Causal Theory of Memory*Required reading:*

“Remembering” by C.B. Martin and Max Deutscher, *The Philosophical Review*, 75: 161-196.

“Memory Causation” by Dorothea Debus (from Bernecker & Michaelian’s *Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Memory* (2017) pp. 63-75).

Optional/ Additional/ Background:

“In Defense of the Causal Theory of Memory” and “The Nature of Memory Causation” Chs. 4-5 of *Memory: A Philosophical Study* by Sven Bernecker (OUP, 2010).

“What is episodic memory if it is a natural kind?” by Sen Cheng and Markus Werning (2016) *Synthese*, 193, 1345-1385.

Week 3 (9/6): Challenges to the Causal Theory*Required reading:*

“Accounting for Epistemic Relevance: A new problem for the Causal Theory of Memory” by Dorothea Debus (2010), *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 47: 17-29.

“Memory and Representation” by Norman Malcolm (1970), *Noûs*, 4, 59-70.

“Representing the Past: Memory Traces and the Causal Theory of Memory” by Sarah Robins (2016), *Philosophical Studies*, 173, 2993-3013.

Optional/ Additional/ Background:

“Beyond the Causal Theory? Fifty years after Martin and Deutscher” Kourken Michaelian and Sarah Robins, ch. 1 of *New Directions in the Philosophy of Memory* (Routledge, 2018).

“The Causal Theory” ch. 5 of *Mental Time Travel: Episodic Memory and our knowledge of the personal past* by Kourken Michaelian (MIT Press, 2016).

“Memory Unchained” by Roger Squires, *The Philosophical Review*, 78: 178-196.

Week 4 (9/13): Alternatives to the Causal Theory

Required reading:

“Is memory for remembering? Recollecting as a form of episodic hypothetical thinking” by Felipe De Brigard (2014), *Synthese*, 191, 1-31.

“The Simulation Theory” ch. 6 of *Mental Time Travel: Episodic Memory and our knowledge of the personal past* by Kourken Michaelian (MIT Press, 2016).

“The Functional Character of Memory” by Jordi Fernandez (2018) in *New Directions in the Philosophy of Memory*, pp. 52-72.

Optional/ Additional/ Background:

“A case for procedural causality in episodic recollection” by Denis Perrin (2018) in *New Directions in the Philosophy of Memory*, pp. 33-50.

“Epistemic and non-epistemic theories of remembering” by Steven James (2018) in *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*.

Week 5 (9/20): NO CLASS MEETING

***Optional individual meetings to discuss participation, course content, etc.

Week 6 (9/27): Memory Content

Required reading:

“The intentional objects of memory” by Jordi Fernandez (2017), *Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Memory*, pp. 88-99.

“The Remembered: Understanding the Content of Episodic Memory” by Mark Rowlands (2018) in *New Directions in the Philosophy of Memory*, pp. 279-293.

Optional/ Additional/ Background:

“Memory Images” by Elizabeth Irvine (2017), *Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Memory*, pp. 141-153.

Week 7 (10/4): Consciousness and Mental Time Travel

Required reading:

“Memory and consciousness” by Paula Droege (2017), *Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Memory*, pp. 103-112.

“Memory as Mental Time Travel” by Denis Perrin and Kourken Michaelian (2017), *Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Memory*, pp. 228-239.

Optional/ Additional/ Background:

“The past made present: mental time travel in episodic recollection” by Matthew Soteriou (2018), in *New Directions in the Philosophy of Memory*, pp. 294-312.

“Memory and self-consciousness” by José Luis Bermúdez (2017), *Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Memory*, pp. 180-191.

Week 8 (10/11): Perspective and Self

Required reading:

“Memory and Perspective” by Christopher McCarroll and John Sutton (2017), *Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Memory*, pp. 113-126.

“Modes of Presentation in Personal Memory” ch. 6 of *Remembering from the Outside* (OUP, 2018) by Christopher McCarroll, pp. 150-180.

“Personal Memory and the Perspectival Mind” ch. 7 of *Remembering from the Outside* (OUP, 2018) by Christopher McCarroll, pp. 181-198.

Optional/ Additional/ Background:

Additional chapters from McCarroll’s *Remembering from the Outside*.

Week 9 (10/18): Epistemological Role (Debus, Teroni)

Required reading:

“Handle with Care: Activity, Passivity, and the Epistemological Role of Recollective Memories” by Dorothea Debus (2018), in *New Directions in the Philosophy of Memory*, pp. 119-136.

“On Seeming to Remember” by Fabrice Teroni (2018), in *New Directions in the Philosophy of Memory*, pp. 329-346.

Optional/ Additional/ Background:

“Remembering Past Experiences: episodic memory, semantic memory, and the epistemic asymmetry” by Christoph Hoerl (2018), in *New Directions in the Philosophy of Memory*, pp. 313-328.

Week 10 (10/25): Affective Memory

Required reading:

“Rilkean Memory” ch. 3 of *Memory and the Self* by Mark Rowlands (OUP, 2016).

“Nostalgia and Mental Simulation” by Felipe de Brigard

Optional/ Additional/ Background:

“Painful Memories” by Philip Gerrans (2018), in *New Directions in the Philosophy of Memory*, pp. 158-178.

“Affective Memory: A little help from our imagination” by Margherita Arcangeli and Jérôme Dokic (2018), in *New Directions in the Philosophy of Memory*, pp. 139-157.

Week 11 (11/1): NO CLASS MEETING

***Optional individual meetings to discuss participation, course content, etc.

Week 12 (11/8): Memory Errors

Required reading:

“Misremembering” by Sarah Robins (2016), *Philosophical Psychology*, 29, 432-447.

“Confabulating, misremembering, relearning: The simulation theory of memory and unsuccessful remembering” by Kourken Michaelian, *Frontiers in Psychology*, 7.

Optional/ Additional/ Background:

“A Causal Theory of Mnemonic Confabulation” by Sven Bernecker (2017), *Frontiers in Psychology*.

“Confabulation and Constructive Memory” by Sarah Robins (2018), *Synthese*.

Week 13: (11/15): Forgetting

Required reading:

“Forgetting” by Matthew Frise (2018), *New Directions in the Philosophy of Memory*, pp. 223-240.

“Responsibility for Forgetting” by Murray, Murray, Stewart, Sinnott-Armstrong, and De Brigard (2018), *Philosophical Studies*.

“On the Blameworthiness of Forgetting” by Sven Bernecker (2018), in *New Directions in the Philosophy of Memory*, pp. 241-258.

Optional/ Additional/ Background:

“An obligation to forget” by David Matheson (2017), *Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Memory*, pp. 364-372.

“Memory, desire, and value in *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*” by Julia Driver (2009). In C. Grau (ed.) *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind (Philosophers on Film)*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Week 14 (11/22): THANKSGIVING, NO CLASS MEETING

Week 15 (11/29): Carl Craver’s visit

*****Readings TBD

Week 16 (12/6): Presentations