

PHIL 291_01
“Advanced Seminar in Epistemology and Metaphysics”
Perceptual Knowledge and Disjunctivism
Monday, 6-8:45pm, Sweeney Hall 241
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KNOWLEDGE = ?

Perception? Truth?
Belief?
Justification? Evidence? Reliability?
Certainty? Rationality?

Perceptual experience plays a key role in acquiring knowledge about the world we live in and it continues to be a central topic of research in philosophy today. Yet, there is a fundamental problem in perception: our perceptual experiences are vulnerable to error! In other words, since there is always the possibility that what appears to be an accurate perceptual experience is actually an illusion or hallucination, how is genuine perceptual knowledge possible? Disjunctivism, as a theory of perception, claims that the visual experience when one veridically experiences an object is different in kind from a non-veridical experience. For instance, let's say you are sitting at your kitchen table and you have a visual experience of a bright, yellow lemon in front of you; you see the lemon. Now let's say you are prone to hallucinations or you are a brain-in-a-vat and you have a visual experience as of a bright, yellow lemon in front of you. Although in the both cases, your experience *appears* to be the same, the disjunctivist will argue that the visual experiences in both cases are not the same. The *epistemological* disjunctivist will argue that in a veridical experience, the subject has different perceptual evidence than if she were merely hallucinating. In this course, we will examine the motivations for disjunctivism in acquiring perceptual knowledge and consider some arguments against it.

Assignments: Two Short Explication Papers (about 3 pages), Midterm Paper (5-6 pages), Final Paper (7-9 pages)