

Functions

PHIL 532: Metaphysics, Fall 2007

T 3:30–6:00

Instructor: Colin Klein
cvklein@uic.edu
CRN: 26681
1420 University Hall
(312) 413-1801
Office Hours: Thu 12-2, and by appointment

Course Description

This course will survey some literature on functions, focusing in particular on the notion of function in psychology and biology. The first half of the course will look at classic literature on functions—what the metaphysical place of functional properties might be, what sort of evolutionary or causal background must be in place for something to have a function, what functions explain, and so on.

In the second half of the course we will consider the relationship between functions and parthood, focusing especially on the role of decomposition and localization in neuroscience.

Requirements

- One APA style presentation (20 minutes) and one APA style response (10 minutes). Details TBA.
- A seminar paper of 15–20 pages.

Texts

Texts will be on reserve in the philosophy department library or distributed as PDFs before the session. There will be no texts at the bookstore. If you feel like purchasing anything I would suggest David J. Buller's collection *Function, Selection, and Design*, as the first half of the course will have a fair bit of reading from it.

Tentative Schedule of Readings

- Week 1** Introduction
Optional: Buller “Natural Teleology” (FSD)
- Week 2** Wright “Functions” & Millikan “Proper Functions” (FSD)
- Week 3** Cummins “Functional Analysis” (FSD)
Optional: Chapters 1& 2 of The Nature of Psychological Explanation
- Week 4** Bigelow and Pargetter “Functions” (FSD)
Neander “The Telological Notion of ‘Function’ ” (FSD)
- Week 5** Millikan “An Ambiguity in the Notion ‘Function’ ” (FSD)
Griffiths “Functional Analysis and Proper Functions” (FSD)
- Week 6** Kitcher “Function and Design” (FSD)
Godfrey-Smith “Functions: Consensus Without Unity” (FSD)
- Week 7** Neander “Malfunctioning” (FSD)
Hardcastle “On the Normativity of Functions” (res)
- Week 8** Sider “Parthood” (res)
- Week 9** Johnston “Parts and Principles: False Axioms in Mereology” (res)
optional: Aristotle De Anima II.1–II.4
- Week 10** Lycan “The continuity of Levels of Nature” (res)
Sober “Putting the Function Back Into Functionalism” (res)
- Week 11** Fodor, Parts I of *The Modularity of Mind* (res)
Optional: Parts II-IV
- Week 12** Machamer, Darden, and Craver “Thinking about Mechanisms” (res)
Glennan “Rethinking Mechanistic Explanation” (res)
- Week 13** Bechtel & Richardson, Chapters 2 & 5 of *Discovering Complexity* (res)
- Week 14** Craver and Bechtel “Top Down Causation without Top-down Causes” (res)
Craver “Interlevel Experiments and Multilevel Mechanisms in the Neuroscience of Memory” (res)
- Week 15** Lombrozo and Carey “Functional Explanation and the Function of Explanation” (res)