

Cognitive Science Seminar 2010: "Others' Minds"

How do we understand, know, or "share" mental states of others? What is the difference between "understanding" "knowing" or "sharing" these mental states?

These two questions form the backbone of what will be a semester long discussion of problems and puzzles surrounding the minds of other beings – whether human, animal, robotic, etc. While the semester won't avoid empirical research, it will be preoccupied with theory, and philosophical theory in particular. We will begin with four weeks on the general subject of empathy, with an emphasis on the classic philosophical debate between so called theory-theories and simulation theories of what philosophers call "mindreading" – the manifest ability we have to represent other creatures as having mental states. Week 5 (Oct. 6) will be focused on the prominent work of contemporary empathy-scholar Karsten Steuber, who will be here to lead a discussion of his work and give a public presentation. The same week will be capped off by the 2010 Spindel conference, which will include three days of discussion of the particular subject "Empathy and Ethics." From here the seminar will consider critical challenges to theory-theory debate, discussion of how mindreading relates specifically to cases of understanding the intentional action of others, the phenomenon known as "joint" or "shared" intention, as well as possible insights of philosophical phenomenology for the cognitive science of other minds.

Schedule

Sep. 1 **Organizational and Background:** Graduate Students Only. No public portion.

Sep. 8 **The classic philosophical problem of "other minds":** Leading: Stephan Blatti (U. Memphis, Philosophy). Public portion: R. Debes to make opening remarks and S. Blatti presenting

Sep. 15 **Empathy I: A Philosophical History of 'Empathy' & Theory-theory vs. Simulation theory, round one.** Leading: Remy Debes (U. Memphis, Philosophy) leading. Public portion: R. Debes presenting.

Sep. 22 **Empathy II: Theory-theory vs. Simulation theory round two.**

Guest Speaker Shaun Gallagher (Professor of Philosophy and Cognitive Sciences, University of Central Florida)

Title: "Simulation, empathy and narrative"

Sept. 29 **Empathy III: Mirror-neurons & Empathy.**

Guest Speaker Ken Aizawa (Charles T. Beaird Professor of Philosophy, Centenary College, LA Philosophy)

Title: "Empathy, Mirror Neurons, and Action in Perception"

- Oct. 6 **Empathy IV: Empathy and Social Cognition**
- Guest Speaker Karsten Stueber* (Professor and Chair, Philosophy Department, Holy Cross)
- Title: “Social Cognition and the Allure of the Second Person Perspective: In Defense of Empathy and Simulation”
- Oct. 7-9 **“Empathy and Ethics”: The Annual Spindel Conference of the University of Memphis.** To be held in the new UC Building. Opening keynote is Thursday at 7:30 PM. Conference proceeds through Saturday. All events are free and open to University students and faculty. NB: Spindel Activities will replace Seminar of Oct. 13.
- Oct. 13 **No Meeting**
- Oct. 20 **Enough with theory-theory and simulation: Some critical objections to the mindreading debate.** Leading: John Tienson (U. Memphis, Philosophy). Public Portion: J. Tienson presenting.
- Oct. 27 **Intersections with Neuroscience:**
- Guest Speaker John Bickle* (Professor & Chair, Department of Philosophy and Religion, Mississippi State University)
- Title: “Other Minds in Molecular and Cellular Cognition”
- Nov. 3 **“Shared” Intentions, “Joint” Intentions:** Leading: D. Tollefsen (U. Memphis, Philosophy). Public Portion: D. Tollefsen presenting.
- Nov. 10 **Phenomenology meets Cognitive Science**
- Guest Speaker David Morris* (Professor & Chair, Philosophy Department, Concordia University).
- Title: “New Horizons in the Phenomenology and Philosophy of Mind: On Thinking in Time, with Tools”
- Nov. 17 Regular Time replaced by special Thursday event.
- Nov. 18 **Final Public Lecture: Daniel Dennett, Austin B. Fletcher Professor of Philosophy, Tufts University**
- Title: “Humor: An evolutionary/computational Theory”
- Nov. 24 No Class
- Dec. 3 **Last Seminar Meeting:** Graduates discuss abstracts for seminar term-papers. No Public Portion