**Phil:** stuff in red is stuff to add either a hyperlink to or an attached pdf to. Stuff in blue is just a note to you.

**Home Page**

<p>I am the Samuel H. Wolcott Professor of <a href="http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~phildept/">Philosophy at Harvard University,</a> where I have taught since 1994. I received my Ph.D. in <a href=" https://philosophy.sas.upenn.edu/">Philosophy at the University of Pennsylvania</a> in 1994. I was grad student in Psychology for one year at Cornell University (1987-88). And, as a first-gen student, I received my B.B. in <a href="https://www.bucknell.edu/academics/arts-and-sciences-college-of/academic-departments-and-programs/psychology">Psychology at Bucknell University</a> in 1987.</p>

<p>My intellectual interests circle around the mind and our attempts to understand it, from antiquity to today. Questions I lose sleep over include: What makes something count as a mental phenomenon? What is consciousness? What’s the relationship between mind and body and between mind and world? Does unconscious mental life make any sense (and, if it does, what’s its relation to conscious mental life)? What’s the relationship between sensory experience and other mental activities? Do the senses show us what the world is really like or do we perceive it through a distinctive human lens (and if the latter, what follows from that)? Is What’s the line between subject and object (e.g., is your own body the subject or object of perception?) For details see my <a href="/alisonsimmons/research">Research Page</a> and <a href="/alisonsimmons/teaching">Teaching and Advising Page.</a></p>

<p>On the side of my research and teaching, I’ve been helping to create <a href=" https://arxiv.org/ftp/arxiv/papers/1808/1808.05686.pdf">Embedded EthiCS,</a> a program that aims to help Computer Science students to develop the habit of designing not only *efficient* but also *socially responsible* systems. </p>

**Research Page**

**Template:**

<h3>TITLE</h3>

<h4>CITATION</h4>

<p><b><em>Abstract:</em></b>ABSTRACT TEXT</p>

<h2>**Research**</h2><br>

<p>My research centers on early modern (i.e., 17th-18th century) theories of mind and perception. Why? As a student of perceptual psychology, I had unanswered questions that led me back to Descartes and the early moderns. It’s not that Descartes has all the answers, but he has many of the same questions and his way of thinking about the mind sets the agenda for those of us working on perception in both philosophy and psychology today. (There’s a reason Phil Mind courses always start with Descartes!) </p>

<p>Figures I’ve written about include Descartes, Malebranche, Leibniz, Arnauld, and (soon!) Margaret Cavendish and Anne Conway. I’ve also written a bit about early modern Jesuit (Aristotelian) theories of perception. </p>

***<h2>Selected Papers with Abstracts</h2>***

<h3>“Mind-Body Union and the Limits of Cartesian Metaphysics”</h3>

*<h4>Philosophers Imprint* vol. 17, no. 14 (2017): 1-26.</h4>

<p><b><em>Abstract:</em></b> Human beings pose a problem for Descartes’ metaphysics. They seem to be more than a mere sum of their mental and bodily parts; human beings, Descartes insists, are *unions* of mind and body. But what does that union amount to? In the first, negative, part of this paper I argue that, by Descartes’ own lights, there is no way for us to answer this question if we are looking for a proper metaphysics of the union. Metaphysics is the job of the intellect; it involves understanding. On Descartes’ considered view, we don’t *understand* the union; we *feel* it. In the second, positive, part of the paper I argue that, while Descartes does not (and cannot) give a properly metaphysical account of the union, he does provide a rich phenomenology of it that is of both theoretical and practical interest. Along the way, I suggest a phenomenological reading of a number of important passages that scholars have interpreted as Descartes’ attempt to provide a metaphysics of the union.</p>

<h3>"Representation"</h3>

<h4>in The Cambridge Descartes Lexicon, ed. Larry Nolan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming). </h4>

<p><b><em>Abstract:</em></b> An overview of the concept of representation in Descartes’ work. The entry covers (a) the epistemology of mental representation (Was Descartes a “direct realist” or “indirect” realist, and what role do “ideas” play in his theory of mind?), (b) the scope of representation in the Cartesian mind (Are all mental states in the Cartesian mind representational?), and (c) the metaphysics of mental representation (How do mental states represent?) with particular attention to sensations and passions.</p>

<h3>"Re-Humanizing Descartes</h3>

<h4>forthcoming in Philosophic Exchange.</h4>

<p><b><em>Abstract:</em></b> Looks at two “Cartesian” theses that seem to the modern mind to be disturbingly de-humanizing: mind-body dualism and the quest for Objective Knowledge. Together these theses suggest a goal of disembodied minds seeking knowledge form no particular point of view. My aim is to re-humanize the Cartesian project by situating these alienating theses in the context of Descartes treatment of the human being. </p>

<h3>“Sensory Perception of Bodies: Meditation 6.5”</h3>

<h4>in The Cambridge Companion to Descartes’ Meditations, ed. David Cunning (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014): 258-276.</h4>

<p><b><em>Abstract:</em></b> Begins with a brief guided tour of Descartes’ Meditations that highlights the epistemic unraveling of the senses from Meditation 1 to Meditation 6.5. Half way through Meditation 6, Descartes pauses to re-examine the senses in the light of the fact that they are part of a nature given to him by a non-deceiving God. They can’t be all bad. The second half of Meditation 6 is devoted to re-habilitating the senses, an endeavor which involves re-casting them as critical guides to survival. The remainder of the paper explores this re-purposing of the senses in his treatment of bodily awareness, so-called “secondary-quality” perception, and spatial perception. In the end, there is a division of cognitive labor in the cognitive economy of the Cartesian mind: the intellect is our best guide to metaphysics; the senses are our best guides to life and action.</p>

<h3>“Perception in Early Modern Philosophy”</h3>

<h4>in the Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Perception,” ed. Mohan Matthen (Oxford: Oxford University Press), Forthcoming 2013.</h4>

<p>An overview of several of the leading issues discussed among early modern philosopher-scientists concerning sensory perception. These include: (a) the primary-secondary quality distinction; (b) the nature and details of sensory processing; (c) the structure of sense perceptual experience; (d) the place of “ideas” in accounts of sensory perception; and (e) sensory epistemology.</p>

<h3>“Cartesian Consciousness Reconsidered”</h3>

<h4>in Philosophers’ Imprint 12(2) (January 2012): 1-21.</h4>

<p><b><em>Abstract:</em></b> Descartes (in)famously revolutionized our conception of the mind by identifying consciousness as the mark of the mental: all and only thoughts are conscious. Today the idea that all thoughts are conscious sees hopelessly naïve or blindly dogmatic. Empirical psychologists, psychiatrists, and zombie-loving philosophers all embrace the existence, or at least the possibility, of unconscious thoughts. But Descartes faces a problem more serious than being snubbed by today’s intellectuals: in his own work on the mind, Descartes himself seems to posit a whole host of unconscious thoughts. Something is not as it seems. Either Descartes is remarkably inconsistent, or his claim that all thought is conscious is more nuanced than it appears. In this paper I argue that while Descartes was indeed unwavering in his commitment to the conscious mark, he distinguished different types and degrees of consciousness that make for a rather rich cognitive psychology, one that is capable of accommodating a range of phenomena that others might be tempted to identify as unconscious.</p>

<h3> [“Leibnizian Consciousness Reconsidered”](http://www.people.fas.harvard.edu/~asimmons/pdfs/Leibnizian%20Consciousness%20ReconsideredSL.pdf) </h3>

<h4> in Studia leibnitiana 43(2) (2011): 196-215. </h4>

<p><b><em>Abstract:</em></b>Explores one conception of consciousness in Leibniz, viz., the form of external world consciousness that we share with animals. Larry Jorgensen has argued that Leibnizian external world consciousness is a first-order mental property that consists in (sufficient) perceptual distinctness.  While I (now) agree that this form of consciousness in Leibniz is not a higher-order property, I argue that it does not consist in perceptual distinctness.  It consists rather in a trans-temporal property of a mental state that Leibniz identifies as a kind of memory.  Consciousness, in short, takes time.  We might think of it as working memory that keeps perceptions active long enough to be joined with other co-present and recently past perceptions to create a unified experience of the world. </p>

# <h3>[“Sensation in the Malebranchean Mind”](http://www.people.fas.harvard.edu/~asimmons/pdfs/Sensations%20in%20a%20Malebranchen%20Mind.pdf) </h3>

<h4>in Topics in Early Modern Theories of Mind, Studies in the History and Philosophy of Mind 9, edited by Jon Miller (Springer Press, 2009): 105-129.</h4>

<p><b><em>Abstract:</em></b>Explores the roles of intentionality and consciousness in Malebranche’s conception of mind by looking closely at his account of sensory perception. I argue that Malebranche was not the first early modern philosopher to break with the view that intentionality is a mark of the mental, as many have supposed, but that he does introduce an interesting distinction between intentionality and representationality and harsh judgment on the epistemic credentials of consciousness. The key to all this is his account of sensory perception, which I argue has been largely misunderstood.</p>

# <h3>[“Guarding the Body: A Cartesian Phenomenology of Perception”](http://www.people.fas.harvard.edu/~asimmons/pdfs/Guarding%20the%20Body.pdf) </h3>

<h4>in Contemporary Perspectives on Early Modern Philosophy: Essays in Honor of Vere Chappell, edited by Paul Hoffman and Gideon Yaffe (Broadview Press, 2008). </h4>

<p><b><em>Abstract:</em></b>Although Descartes and Malebranche both routinely criticize the senses for misrepresenting the material world to us, they just as routinely insist that the senses represent the material world in a way that is especially conducive to self-preservation. What is it about sensory representation that is supposed to make it so conducive to self-preservation? And why do these thinkers suggest that the senses can do a better job of this than even their cherished intellects? </p>

# <h3>[“Spatial Perception from a Cartesian Point of View”](http://www.people.fas.harvard.edu/~asimmons/pdfs/PT%20Spatial%20Perception.pdf) </h3>

<h4>in Philosophical Topics, vol. 31 (2003): 395-423. </h4>

<p><b><em>Abstract:</em></b>Descartes’ proposal in the Sixth Meditation that sensory perception serves as a guide for self-preservation is typically taken to be an ad hoc way of finding a place for secondary quality sensations and bodily sensations. Malebranche, I argue, understands the proposal to be a way of re-conceiving sensory experience as a whole, spatial perception included. This paper examines Malebranche’s case for maintaining that spatial perception is directed to self-preservation. As I interpret it, his argument turns on the fact that spatial perception has a bodily phenomenology; that is, it represents the spatial properties of objects in a way that involves the perceiver’s own body. First, it represents objects egocentrically, as they are spatially related to the perceiver’s own body. Second, bodily awareness often figures into spatial perception. Third, the representational limits of spatial perception reflect the bodily processes on which it depends. All three of these facts about spatial representation through the senses pose problems, from a Cartesian point of view, for the natural philosopher seeking an accurate depiction of the material world. All three, however, prove advantageous to the human being trying to survive in that world. </p>

# <h3>[“Descartes on the Cognitive Structure of Sensory Experience”](http://www.people.fas.harvard.edu/~asimmons/pdfs/PPR%20Cognitive%20Structure.pdf) </h3>

<h4>in Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, vol. 67, no. 3 (2003): 549-579. </h4>

<p><b><em>Abstract:</em></b>Descartes is often thought to bifurcate sensory experience into two distinct cognitive components: the sensing of secondary qualities and the more or less intellectual perceiving of primary qualities. A closer examination of his analysis of sensory perception in the Sixth Replies and of his treatment of sensory processing in the Dioptrics and Treatise on Man tells a different story. I argue that Descartes offers a unified cognitive account of sensory experience according to which the senses and intellect operate together to produce a fundamentally imagistic representation of the world in both its primary and secondary quality aspects. At stake here is not only our understanding of the cognitive structure of sensory experience, but the relation between sense and intellect more generally in the Cartesian mind. The deep bifurcation in the Cartesian mind, I argue, is not between the sensory perception of primary and secondary qualities but between sensory perception and purely intellectual perception. </p>

# <h3>[“Changing the Cartesian Mind: Leibniz on Sensation, Representation and Consciousness”](http://www.people.fas.harvard.edu/~asimmons/pdfs/PR%20Changing%20the%20Cartesian%20Mind.pdf) </h3>

<h4>in The Philosophical Review, vol. 110, no. 1 (January 2001). Reprinted in The Philosopher’s Annual, vol. 24 (2002): 195-236. </h4>

<p><b><em>Abstract:</em></b>Examines the overlooked but important tension between the Cartesians and Leibniz over the nature of mentality and the structure of the mind. According to the Cartesians, the distinctive mark of the mental is consciousness: all mental states are thus conscious, but, according to some Cartesians, they may not represent anything. Leibniz, by contrast, argues that the mark of the mental is representation of a special sort: all mental states are thus representational, but they may not be conscious. This fundamental difference in conception of the nature of the mental is reflected in their respective accounts of sensation, which I explore in the second half of the paper, focussing on the Leibnizian account. </p>

# <h3>[“Sensible Ends: Latent Teleology in Descartes’ Account of Sensation”](http://www.people.fas.harvard.edu/~asimmons/pdfs/JHP%20Sensible%20Ends.pdf) </h3>

<h4>in Journal of the History of Philosophy, vol. 39 (2001): 49-75. </h4>

<p><b><em>Abstract:</em></b>Examines the use of teleological explanation in Descartes’ account of sensory perception. In the first half, I argue that Descartes advocates a genuinely teleological conception of the senses. In so doing, I reject familiar attempts to discharge the teleology. In the second half, I examine Descartes’ famous proscription against teleology and argue that it is not a sweeping assault on finality, but a more directed attack on particular uses of ends in natural philosophy. The proscription leaves standing a form of teleological explanation that proves crucial to Descartes’ own treatment of sensory perception.</p>

# <h3>[“Are Cartesian Sensations Representational?”](http://www.people.fas.harvard.edu/~asimmons/pdfs/Nous%20Sensation.pdf) </h3>

<h4>in Noûs, vol. 33 (1999): 347-369. </h4>

<p><b><em>Abstract:</em></b>Takes on the question whether, what and how secondary quality sensations and bodily sensations represent anything in the corporeal world in the context of Descartes’ theory of sensory perception. I argue that Descartes has pressing philosophical motivation to argue that these sensations do indeed represent something in the corporeal world; they are more than mere window dressing of the mind. In response to the pressure, Descartes offers the beginnings of what I call a “bio-functional” account of sensory representation that builds on his claim in the Sixth Meditation that the senses are directed to self-preservation. </p>

# <h3>[“Jesuit Aristotelian Education: The De anima Commentaries”](http://www.people.fas.harvard.edu/~asimmons/pdfs/De%20Anima%20Commentaries.pdf) </h3>

<h4>in The Jesuits: Culture, Learning and the Arts, 1540-1773, edited by John W. O’Malley, S.J., Gauvin Alexander Bailey, Steven J. Harris, and T. Frank Kennedy (Toronto Univ. Press, 1999). </h4>

<p><b><em>Abstract:</em></b>Explores the interpretive strategy that 16th century Jesuit philosopher used in approaching the works of Aristotle, namely, a strong form of rational reconstruction. I examine the way rational reconstruction is used in developing three components of the their Aristotelian theory of sensory cognition: (a) the role of sensible species, (b) the relative activity and passivity of the senses and (c) the role of the agent intellect. </p>

# <h3>[“The Sensory Act: Descartes and the Jesuits on the Efficient Cause of Sensation”](http://www.people.fas.harvard.edu/~asimmons/pdfs/The%20Sensory%20Act.pdf) </h3>

<h4>in Meeting of the Mind: The Relations Between Medieval and Classical Modern European Philosophy, ed. Stephen F. Brown (Brepols, 1998): 63-76. </h4>

<p><b><em>Abstract:</em></b> Challenges the received view that the late scholastic Aristotelians and Descartes are agreed that the senses are passive faculties. While they agree, I argue, they agree that the senses are partly passive and partly active in sensory experience. A close examination of the passive and active roles of the senses reveals a persistent division in explaining the intentionality of sensory experience on the one hand and the consciousness of it on the other. </p>

# <h3> “Explaining Sense Perception: A Scholastic Challenge” </h3>

<h4>in Philosophical Studies, vol. 73 (1994): 257-275. </h4>

<p><b><em>Abstract:</em></b> Explores the philosophical foundations of the “species” theory of sensory perception as develops in late scholastic (16th c.) Jesuit philosophers. I argue that the species theory is a philosophically and textually well-motivated interpretation (and development) of Aristotle’s cryptic claim that sensory perception occurs by the “reception of form with its matter.” </p>

The rest can be taken from the old website (with publication information from my CV if they are listed as “forthcoming” and you can just put the papers listed on the Jesuit section on the same page.

**<h2>Teaching and Advising</h2><br>**

<p>In my teaching and advising, my goal is to help students think more closely, critically, and clearly about things they take for granted. Teaching courses in the history of philosophy is a great way to do that. While some things that historical figures say sound a lot like the things we say, other things they say sound simply bizarre (e.g., Malebranche’s claim that we see all things in God or Cavendish’s claim that even rocks are sentient and rational). In addition to simply learning what people from different cultures and times thought about things, investigating *why* they thought them helps us to understand the structure of rational argument and the relations among concepts. It also helps us get to know our own assumptions and blind spots. And it’s just plain fun.</p>

<p>I think a lot about what and how I teach. I’ve expanded the “what” of my teaching by venturing into what is, for me, new territory. In my early modern courses, I include women philosophers of the period who have been left out of the canon (see Phil 8 and Phil 125 below); I have team-taught courses that juxtapose European and Indian Philosophy (see FS 33F and Phil 191 below); and I have helped to develop and teach one of Harvard’s signature interdisciplinary courses in the humanities (see Hum 10 below). On the “how” front, I aim to create an inclusive classroom where everyone can contribute in some way and where the aim of the class is clear (see, e.g., my Discussion Norms for an undergrad discussion seminar and Best Practices for a grad student workshop). I also work with the wonderful team at the Bok Center’s Learning Lab to develop innovative assignments and class structures (here is a sample assignment).</p>

<p> In recognition of my teaching, I was awarded a five-year Harvard College Professorship (2011-2016) and the Phi Beta Kappa Teaching Award in 2014. I received the Star Family Award for Advising in 2016 and the Everett Mendelsohn Excellence in Mentoring Award in 2018.</p>

<h2> ***Courses 2018-19******:***</h2>

<h3> Phil 122: British Empiricism</h3>

<p>The canonical British Empiricists (Locke, Berkeley, and Hume) take us on a journey from very sensible philosophical starting points to rather extravagant sounding philosophical conclusions. We will explore their influential arguments concerning such things as the self, the external world, mind and body, natural kinds, concepts, language, science, skepticism, and the role of philosophy itself. We will also explore Lady Mary Shephard’s attempt to pull us back from the philosophical brink that the Empiricists lead us to.</p>

<h3> Phil 222: British Empiricism</h3>

<p>A companion course to Phil 122 for graduate students, we will explore the same material as Phil 122 but will add to it both interpretive debates in the secondary literature and pedagogical exercises directed to teaching this material.</p>

<h2> ***Sample Undergrad Courses with Syllabi:***</h2>

<h3><a href="https://courses.harvard.edu/detail?q=id:d\_colgsas\_2017\_1\_110440\_001">**HUM 10A**: A Humanities Colloquium: From Homer to Garcia Marquez</a></h3>

<p>2,500 years of essential works, taught by six professors. Humanities 10a includes works by Homer, Plato, Aristotle, Sappho, Murasaki, Bernal Díaz, Shakespeare, Douglass, Du Bois, Woolf and García Márquez, as well as the Declaration of Independence and The Federalist Papers. One 75-minute lecture plus a 75-minute discussion seminar led by the professors every week. Students also receive instruction in critical writing one hour a week, in writing labs and individual conferences. Students also have opportunities to visit cultural venues and attend musical and theatrical events in Cambridge or Boston.<br><a href="">Syllabus</a></p>

**<h3>FS** **33F**: Map your Way into Philosophy: Mind, Matter, Me</h3>

<p>Humans clearly have minds; we just as clearly have bodies. This raises many puzzles: Are mind and body two things or one? How are they related to each other and the person called me? In this course, we’ll look at a range of arguments about how to understand mind-body-self relations from classic texts in European and Indian Philosophy. Deeply engaging these arguments requires the skills of close reading and argument analysis. To develop these skills, this course will teach Argument Mapping, a technique that involves identifying the essential elements of an argument and constructing a visual map that conveys the argument’s structure at a glance.</p>

<!--Image for Syllabus Attachment--!>

**<h3>****<a href="https://courses.harvard.edu/detail?q=id:d\_colgsas\_2017\_2\_124788\_001">PHIL 8**: Early Modern Philosophy: Self and World</a></h3>

<p>An introduction to some of the major topics and figures of 17th- and 18th-century Western philosophy, and to the skills of close reading, argument construction, and clear writing. We will focus on such metaphysical and epistemological topics as the natures of mind, body and self, the equality of the sexes, the existence of the external world and God, the nature and limits of human knowledge, and the changing relationship between science and philosophy. We will read such philosophers as Rene Descartes, Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia, Margaret Cavendish, John Locke, David Hume, Lady Mary Shepard, and Immanuel Kant. No pre-requisites.<br><a href="">Syllabus 2018</a><br>*<em>Expected to be offered Spring 2020.</em>*</p>

**<h3>****<a href="https://courses.harvard.edu/detail?q=id:d\_colgsas\_2017\_2\_121954\_001">PHIL 125**: Beyond Dualism: Descartes and his Critics</a>**</h3>**

<p>We will explore Descartes' dualism in its historical context. After examining the transformation that Descartes brought about in our conceptions of body and mind (and ourselves), we will consider some of the notorious metaphysical problems his dualism gives rise to and some 17th- and 18th- century attempts to push back against it in the figures of Princess Elizabeth of Bohemia, Henry More, Margaret Cavendish, Anne Conway, and Anton Amo. .<br><a href="">Syllabus 2018</a>><br>*<em>Expected to be offered Spring 2020.</em>*</p>

**<h3><a href="https://courses.harvard.edu/detail?q=id:d\_colgsas\_2018\_2\_114331\_001">PHIL 122**: British Empiricism</a></h3>

<p>The canonical British Empiricists (Locke, Berkeley, and Hume) take us on a journey from very sensible philosophical starting points to rather extravagant sounding philosophical conclusions. We will explore their influential arguments concerning such things as the self, the external world, mind and body, natural kinds, concepts, language, science, skepticism, and the role of philosophy itself. We will also explore Lady Mary Shephard's attempt to pull us back from the philosophical brink that the Empiricists lead us to. .<br><a href="">Syllabus 2015</a></p>

**<h3>****PHIL 191**: Philosophy Without Border: India and Europe</h3>

<p>Indian and Western European traditions of philosophy are rarely studied together, and yet they grapple with many of the same fundamental questions: What am I? What can I know? What really exists? Can a productive philosophical conversation be had between these two philosophical traditions? If so, what would it sound like? We will try to answer these questions by engaging in a close reading of several classic Buddhist texts from the Indian tradition and Hume’s <em>*Treatise of Human Nature</em>* and <em>*Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding</em>* from the Western European tradition*.* We will focus our inquiry on five philosophical topics: language and the contents of mind; causation; the external world; self; and skepticism. .<br><a href="">Syllabus 2014</a></p>

***<h2>Sample Grad Courses with Syllabi:</h2>***

**<h3>PHIL 223**: Cartesian Man</h3>

<p>Descartes is famous for his mind-body dualism, but what happens to human beings in his dualist metaphysics? Are they just composites of mind and body? Some sort of metaphysical mixture of mind and body? Or is there simply no room for human beings in Descartes’ cosmos, as some have charged? Descartes is equally famous for championing the intellect over the senses and passions in his epistemology. He repeatedly urges us to set aside the senses and passions, whose deliverances he describes as “obscure and confused”, in order to achieve a more God-like (or at least angelic) view of things. All of this seems rather de-humanizing. Is Descartes just down on human beings? In this seminar we’ll have a close look at what Descartes actually has to say about human beings and human nature, focusing in on some of the phenomena central to human life: sensory perception, bodily sensations, passions, and the will. In the end, we’ll find that Descartes has a rather rich conception of the human being, and that we’ve been getting a one-sided view of his metaphysics and epistemology for some time. .<br><a href="">Syllabus 2011</a></p>

**<h3>PHIL 224**: Topics in British Empiricism (with Jeff McDonough)**</h3>**

<p>This course is a graduate research seminar in Classic British Empiricism. As such, it presupposes familiarity with the basic texts and ideas of John Locke, George Berkeley, and David Hume of the sort students get from taking Phil 122 or its equivalent. <em>*If you want to take this course but have not taken Phil 122 (or its equivalent) we strongly urge you to audit Phil 122 this semester alongside the seminar.</em>* Each week we will read a recent research article. Your job will be to (a) read it carefully; (b) determine its strengths as an interpretation of Locke, Berkeley, or Hume; and (c) determine the main challenges to the interpretation. In order to do that, you will have to work through the relevant primary texts and, often, some of the opposing secondary literature. In class we will discuss the article with the author, who will join us either in person or via Skype. </p>

<p>Although the articles range in topic, we mean to keep our eye on an overarching question throughout the term: <em>*What is the relationship between empiricism and skepticism?</em>* While Locke was no skeptic, and seems to have had little patience for skeptical worries, he *does* emphasize the limit of human understanding, and many have charged that his “way of ideas” invites skepticism. Berkeley is routinely treated as a kind of skeptic, despite his insistence that one of the aims of his philosophical project is precisely to *combat* skepticism. In spite of his idealism, he maintains that he is in fact a defender of commonsense who sides “in all things with the mob.” Hume is regularly portrayed as a skeptic, and he spends much of *Treatise* I.iv apparently developing skeptical arguments. But the take away of Hume’s engagement with skeptical arguments remains hotly contested among early modern scholars and many have seen him as a champion of naturalism rather than skepticism. .<br><a href="">Syllabus 2015</a></p>

**<h3>PHIL 300a**: First Year Colloquium: David Hume and David Lewis**</h3>**<p><a href="">Syllabus 2013</a></p>

**<h3>PHIL 300a**: First Year Colloquium: Causation Then and Now**</h3>**<p><a href="">Syllabus 2009</a></p>

**<h2>Links</h2><br>**

***<h3><a href="*** https://arxiv.org/ftp/arxiv/papers/1808/1808.05686.pdf***">Embedded EthiCS*** (coming soon!)</a></h3>

<p>Embedded EthiCS is a pedagogical program run jointly between Philosophy and Computer Science at Harvard that aims to teach Computer Science students to develop the habit of designing not only *efficient* but also *socially responsible* systems.</p>

***<h3><a href="*** https://scholar.harvard.edu/mcdonough/history-philosophy-workshop">***Harvard History of Philosophy Workshop***</a></h3>

<p>The Harvard History of Philosophy Workshop brings together scholars working on the history of philosophy across a variety of historical periods and traditions. We meet intermittently during the course of the academic year to discuss work in progress. All are welcome to attend.</p>

***<h3><a href="***https://bokcenter.harvard.edu/learning-lab">***Harvard Learning Lab</a></h3>***

<p>The Bok Center’s Learning Lab is an intergenerational team and a studio space built to support creative approaches to teaching and learning.</p>

***<h3><a href="***https://projectvox.org/about-the-project">***Project Vox</a></h3>***

<p>Project Vox is a website devoted to a number of early modern women have been unjustly ignored in our narratives of the history of philosophy, with a focus on Mary Astell, Lady Masham, Margaret Cavendish, Anne Conway and Émilie Du Châtelet. The website aims to provide students at all levels with materials to begin exploring their ideas; to provide teachers with course ideas; and it aims to change our current conception of the philosophical canon. </p>