Course Description
In this course we will examine what concepts are and what functions they need to perform. More specific topics include whether and how inferential role can play a constitutive role in individuating concepts (atomism and holism); how the reference of concepts is determined (individualism and externalism); compositionality (the language of thought, prototypes, cognitive maps); acquisition and evolution (perception, language, epistemic reflection, non-human thought); and pluralism. For each topic, we’ll consider the canonical philosophical background, relevant psychological investigations, and more recent philosophical discussion.

Readings
The listed readings are provisional and subject to revision, especially in light of your suggestions. All readings will be posted on Sakai.

Recommended Texts:
Margolis and Laurence: Concepts: Core Readings
Margolis and Laurence: The Conceptual Mind: New Directions
Peacocke: A Study of Concepts
Kripke: Naming and Necessity

Course Requirements
• Weekly readings; attendance; and active, sustained participation – even for auditors.
• Weekly brief blog posts – even for auditors.
• For ‘non-research’ option: a ‘squib’, 2,500-4,000 words plus c. 3-sentence abstract, focusing on ONE claim from an assigned reading, identifying, explaining and critically evaluating the primary argument for that claim.
• For ‘research’ option: a substantive paper, 6,000-10,000 words plus abstract. Students will present abstracts in the final class.

All writing should be submitted electronically, in .pdf format.

Everyone – auditors and registered students – should post a brief (max 1 para) comment on the week’s forum on Sakai before class. This can be an exegetical or substantive question, a philosophical rumination, or a comment on someone else’s comments. I will post a question or two by Friday to get things started.

All registered students will lead discussion once (numbers permitting). This does NOT mean summarizing the reading. Rather, you should prepare a 1 page easily readable handout that sets up the overall topic, identifies the 3 or 4 most interesting claims and/or moves (total!), and poses 2-3 questions for discussion. Email the handout to me by Sunday night. You will take the first 10 minutes of class, and then step in and out as discussion leader thereafter.

We will be covering a lot of heterogeneous material in this course, and no one (including me) can be expert in all of it. Recognized ignorance is often positively useful, and only rarely a reason for embarrassment. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy should be your go-to guide (and more).
Schedule of Topics and Readings

Tu 9/8  Introduction; The “Classical” View
         [Margolis and Laurence: “Introduction” to Concepts: Core Readings]

1. Inference, Atomism, and Holism

M 9/14  Philosophical Background
         [Locke: Essay Concerning Human Understanding, II.2, 3, 12, 23(1-11), 24; III.3]
         [Frege: “Sense and Reference,” “Function and Concept,” “Thought”]
         • Peacocke: A Study of Concepts, ch. 1
         Précis of A Study of Concepts
         [Harman: “(Nonolipsitic) Conceptual Role Semantics”]

M 9/21  Psychological Investigations
         [Quine: “Two Dogmas of Empiricism”]
         • Murphy & Medin: “The Role of Theories in Conceptual Coherence”
         [Carey: “Knowledge Acquisition: Enrichment or Conceptual Change?”]
         [Margolis: “The Significance of the Theory Analogy in the Study of Concepts”]

M 9/28  Philosophical Responses
         [Fodor & Lepore: “Why Meaning (Probably) Isn’t Conceptual Role”]
         • Block: “Holism, Mental and Semantic”
         • Brandon: Articulating Reasons, chs. 1 & 6

2. Reference, Essentialism, and Intersubjectivity

M 10/5  Philosophical Background
         [Putnam: “Meaning and Reference”]
         [Kripke: Naming and Necessity, Lecture 3]
         • Burge: “Individualism and the Mental”
         • Fodor: “Theory of Content II”

M 10/12 Psychological Investigations
         [Medin & Ortony: “Psychological Essentialism”]
         [Strevens: “The Essentialist Aspect of Naive Theories”]
         • Ahn et al: “Why Essences are Essential in the Psychology of Concepts”
         • Keil et al: “Discerning the Division of Cognitive Labor”
         • Leslie: “Essence and Natural Kinds: When Science Meets Preschooler Intuition”
         [Rips: “Necessity and Natural Categories”]
         [Gelman: “Psychological Essentialism in Children”]
         [Strevens: “Only Causation Matters: Reply to Ahn et al”]
         [Malt: “Water is not H20”]

M 10/19 Philosophical Responses
         [Fodor: “Methodological Solipsism Considered as a Research Strategy”]
         • Jackson: “Reference and Description Revisited”
         • Chalmers: “The Foundations of Two-Dimensional Semantics”
         [Johnston And Leslie: “Concepts, Analysis, Generics And The Canberra Plan”]
M 10/26  **Thick Concepts**  
[Dancy: “In Defense of Thick Concepts”]  
[Gibbard: “Thick Concepts and Warrant for Feelings”]  
- Kalish: “Normative Concepts”  
- Eklund: “What are Thick Concepts?”  
[Blackburn: “Through Thick and Thin”]  

3. **Systematicity and Compositionality**  
**M 11/2**  **Arguments for LOT**  
- Fodor: “Why there Still Has to Be a Language of Thought”  
- Davies: “Concepts, Connectionism, and the Language of Thought”  
  [Fodor & Pylyshyn: “Connectionism and Cognitive Architecture”]  
  [Peacocke: *A Study of Concepts*, ch. 2]  
  [Johnson: “On the Systematicity of Language and Thought”]  

**M 11/9**  **Prototypes and Stereotypes**  
[Rosch: “Principles of Categorization”]  
[Rey: “Concepts and Stereotypes”]  
- Leslie: “Carving Up the Social World with Generics”  
- Camp: “Logical Concepts and Associative Characterizations”  
  [Smith et al: “Combining Prototypes: A Selective Modification Model”]  
  [Leslie et al: “Cultural Transmission of Social Essentialism”]  

**M 11/16**  **Non-Sentential Thought**  
[Fodor: “The Revenge of the Given”]  
- Giardino and Greenberg: “Varieties of Iconicity”  
- Kulvicki: “Analog Representation and the Parts Principle”  
  [Rescorla: “Cognitive Maps and the Language of Thought”]  
  [Camp: “Why Cartography is Not Propositional”]  

**M 11/23**  **Singular Thought and Predication**  
[Kripke: *Naming and Necessity*, Lectures 1&2]  
- Goodman: “Against the Mental-files Conception of Singular Thought”  

4. **Achieving Objectivity**  
**M 11/30**  **Acquisition and Evolution**  
- Carey: *Précis of The Origin of Concepts* and responses  
- Burge: “Steps toward the Origins of Propositional Thought”  
  [Prinz: “The Return of Concept Empiricism”]  
  [Burge: “Origins of Perception”]  
  [Carey: “Why Theories of Concepts Should Not Ignore the Problem of Acquisition”]  

**M 12/7**  Review, Papers, and Outstanding Questions  

**M 12/21**  **Final Paper Due**