

# Explanatory gaps

## Course description

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Course code: FLFI.04.010

Also as *Undergraduate Research Seminar (Eriseminar)*, 4AP, FLFI.00.022

Time and place: Lossi 3-307, on Wednesdays 16.15-17.45

**Annotation:** From the very advent of modern science, its progress is intimately connected with shaking and altering the ways human beings conceive of themselves and their place in the world's order of things. At present time, modern psychology and neuroscience confronts us again with results that apparently are at odds with our "folk-theoretic", or *a priori* understanding. The question is whether our folk theoretic understanding just turns out to be erroneous (so that we have to replace our common sense or "folk" notions with the "scientific" ones), or whether the apparent clash needs to be resolved in a different way, preserving the (scientific) legitimacy of our folk theoretic conceptions. The course focuses on one expression of this clash - the notion of an explanatory gap. We are faced with an explanatory gap when the set of truths that makes up the intended explanans (e.g. the truths of neuroscience) does not entail the explanandum, the phenomenon we want to explain (e.g. phenomenal consciousness). In order to find a better understanding of what is going on in cases of explanatory gaps, we will have a look at theories of scientific explanation, theories of ontological elimination, and theories about the status of folk-conceptions and their development.

## Study Materials

There will be one introductory meeting and 11 seminars. Readings for seminars are available for photocopying in the philosophy department, some papers can be downloaded from the ŌIS.

## Assessment

Examination criteria: Students have to write in alternate groups 4 sets of replies to questions about seminar texts (every other week). The questions are provided. The final mark will consist of the marks of homework units (all together 75% of the final mark) and the performance in class (25%). The course passing requirement is a regular attendance and having all four reply sets marked better than 'F'. It is allowed to miss a seminar up to three times, provided one writes a summary of the seminar text (if it was one's groups turn to hand in a reply set, then also this would be needed in addition to the summary).

Those attending the Undergraduate Research Seminar are required to write a seminar paper ca. 10 pages, 3000-3500 words (Deadline 15.05). The topic for the BA thesis will be formulated by 15.06.2008.

## Schedule and Topics

Changes might occur

1. 20.02 INTRODUCTORY MEETING (Bruno Mölder, Daniel Cohnitz)
2. 27.02 SEMINAR 1: Explanatory gaps in the philosophy of mind (Bruno Mölder)  
J. Levine, 'Materialism and Qualia: The Explanatory Gap', *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, 1983, 64, 54-61.  
Also in Estonian as 'Materialism ja kvaalid: Seletuslik lünk', *Akadeemia*, 2004, nr 4, lk 749-62
3. 05.03 SEMINAR 2: Conceptual analysis and explanation I (Daniel Cohnitz)  
F. Jackson, 'Armchair Metaphysics'. In J. O'Leary Hawthorne & M. Michael (eds), *Philosophy in Mind*. Kluwer, 1994, 23-42.

4. 12.03 **SEMINAR 3: Conceptual analysis and explanation II** (Daniel Cohnitz)  
N. Block, R. Stalnaker, 'Conceptual Analysis, Dualism, and the Explanatory Gap', *Philosophical Review*, 1999, 108: 1-46.
5. 19.03 **SEMINAR 4: Conceptual analysis and explanation III** (Bruno Mölder)  
D. Chalmers, F. Jackson, 'Conceptual Analysis and Reductive Explanation', *Philosophical Review*, 2001, 110: 315-61
6. 26.03 **SEMINAR 5: Explanation, Entailment and Reduction I** (Daniel Cohnitz)  
E. Nagel, 'The Reduction of Theories'. In E. Nagel, *The Structure of Science: Problems in the Logic of Scientific Explanation*. 2nd ed. Hackett Publishing Company, 1979, 336-366
7. 02.04 **SEMINAR 6: Explanation, Entailment and Reduction II** (Daniel Cohnitz)  
J. Kim, 'Reduction, Reductive Explanation, and Closing the "Gap"'. In J. Kim, *Physicalism, or Something Near Enough*. Princeton University Press, 2005, 93-120
8. 09.04 **SEMINAR 7: Philosophy and Explanatory Gaps** (Daniel Cohnitz)  
C. McGinn, 'Philosophical Perplexity'. In C. McGinn, *Problems in Philosophy: The Limits of Inquiry*. Blackwell, 1993, 1-26
9. 16.04 **SEMINAR 8: Phenomenal Concepts** (Bruno Mölder)  
P. Carruthers, 'Reductive Explanation and the "Explanatory Gap"', *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 2004, 34, 2, 153-74. Also In P. Carruthers, *Consciousness: Essays from a Higher-Order Perspective*, Oxford University Press, 2005, 18-35
10. 23.04 **SEMINAR 9: Explanatory Gaps in Epistemology** (Gea Kőverjalg)
11. 30.04 **SEMINAR 10: Personal and Subpersonal Levels** (Bruno Mölder)  
M. Davies, 'Persons and Their Underpinnings', *Philosophical Explorations*, 2000, 1, 43-62
12. 07.05 **SEMINAR 11: Explanatory Gaps in Economics** (Michiru Nagatsu)