

# Emotions (Spring 2018, University of Bern)

## Description and Learning Outcomes:

Emotions play a fundamental role in our lives. For example, if reading the description of a seminar makes you feel excited, you might think that the seminar is interesting. However, if reading the description of a seminar makes you feel bored, you will probably judge that the seminar is not worth signing up for. This example illustrates a topic that has been at the center of much philosophical debate: the relationship between emotions and (how we place) value. This relationship has motivated different theories of emotions. Should we understand emotions as value judgments? As “embodied” appraisals? Or rather as direct perceptions of value? In this seminar, we will address these and other questions regarding the nature of emotions (e.g., their rationality, biological correlates, dependence on language and culture...) by reading the work of contemporary authors in philosophy, psychology, and neuroscience. The seminar allows students to:

- Critically evaluate philosophical theories of emotion, and assess their fit with the empirical evidence from psychology and neuroscience.
- Gain a deeper understanding of one of the topics discussed in the seminar through independent preparation.

## Evaluation:

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Weight</i>	<i>Description</i>
<b>Active participation</b>	20%	Informed contributions to the seminar discussions ( <i>ATTENDANCE IS MANDATORY</i> ).
<b>Take-home tests</b>	20%	ABC questions about the main positions and arguments in the seminar readings. Participants will be given one week to finish each test (but they will just need a couple of minutes if they have done the readings).
<b>Presentation</b>	20%	Present the main points of one of the seminar readings during the relevant session (see program). Raise questions to guide the discussion.
<b>Final essay</b>	40%	Write a review of extant work or original contribution to one of the topics discussed in the seminar (max. 3000 words).

## Overview Readings:

- Deonna et al. (2015) 'Emotions: Philosophical issues about'
- De Sousa (2014) 'Emotion'
- Goldie (2007) 'Emotion'

## Program:

<i>Day</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Readings</i>
1	<b>Introduction</b>	---
BLOCK 1: EMOTION THEORY		
2	<b>Cognitive theory</b>	Nussbaum (2004) 'Emotions as judgments of value and importance'  Deonna & Teroni (2012) 'Emotions as value judgments'
3	<b>Somatic theory</b>	William James (1884) 'What is an emotion?'  Barlassina & Newen (2013) 'The role of bodily perception in emotion: In defense of an Impure Somatic Theory'
4	<b>Perceptual theory</b>	Tappolet (2017) 'Emotion and Perception'  Brady (2010) 'Virtue, emotion and attention'
5	<b>Attitudinal theory</b>	Deonna & Teroni (2015) 'Emotions as attitudes'  Rossi & Tappolet (2018) 'What kind of evaluative states are emotions? The attitudinal theory vs. the perceptual theory of emotions'
6	<b>Basic emotion theory</b>	Ekman (1999) 'Basic emotions'
BLOCK 2: CHALLENGES		
7	<b>The problem of nature</b>	Barrett (2006) 'Are emotions natural kinds?'  Lindquist (2012) 'The brain basis of emotion: a meta-analytic review.'

8 **The problem of nurture** Wierzbicka (2009) 'Language and Metalanguage: Key issues in emotion research'

Boiger & Mesquita (2012) 'The Construction of Emotion in Interactions, Relationships, and Cultures'

9 **The problem of nurture II** David Konstan (2012) 'Emotions in history'

Dixon (2012) 'Emotion: The history of a keyword in crisis'

### BLOCK 3: FACING THE CHALLENGES

10 **Conceptual act theory** Barrett (2012) 'Emotions are real'

Cameron, Lindquist, Gray (2015) 'A Constructionist Review of Morality and Emotions No Evidence for Specific Links Between Moral Content'

11 **New Basic emotion theory** Scarantino (2012) 'How to define emotions scientifically'

Scarantino (2011) 'Don't give up on basic emotions'

### BLOCK 4: WORKSHOP "EMOTIONS AND EMOTION CONCEPTS"

12 **Day I** See Conference Program

13 **Day II** See Conference Program