



**University of  
Zurich** <sup>UZH</sup>

**Institute of Philosophy**

**Doctoral Programme: "Philosophy – Language, Mind, and Practice"**

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**Master Class**

**The Significance of Scepticism**

**Barry Stroud**

**University of California, Berkeley**

**2nd & 4th December 2017**

## Synopsis

The problem of our knowledge of the world represents a formidable challenge to our understanding. Very powerful reasoning appears to lead to the conclusion that we can know nothing about the surrounding world on the basis of sense-perception. What is the source of this "sceptical" argument's obvious appeal? How is it to be avoided?

Answering this question requires considering the argument in its strongest form. Taking very seriously what it says about the limits of perceptual experience appears to make the "sceptical" conclusion unavoidable. Can we understand and accept that conception of the limits of perception as an account of our position in the world? If so, how? If not, why not? This is what needs to be explained.

An understanding of the role of sense-perception in knowing things about the world that would avoid the "sceptical" conclusion is suggested. It requires competence in the use of concepts applicable to independently existing objects as a condition of making sense of ourselves as experiencing an enduring world. Would even this kind of view give us a satisfactory positive answer to the traditional question of how we know what we know about the world around us?

Causal connections between things, and the necessity of necessary truths, have been held to be unknowable by experience. What such statements say, and how we know them if we do, must therefore be accounted for in some other way. Can they be understood as true solely in virtue of something about us and our responses to the world, not simply the way things are in the independent world?

## **Programme and Readings**

**Saturday, 2nd December 2017**

**9:30 – 12:30: Introduction to Scepticism**

Stroud, B.: *The Significance of Philosophical Scepticism*, ch. 1,2.

**14:00 – 16:00: Scepticism and the Restricted Scope of Sense Perception I**

Stroud, B.: Self-Profile.

Stroud, B.: The Epistemological Promise of Externalism.

**16:30 – 18:30: Scepticism and the Restricted Scope of Sense Perception II**

Stroud, B.: The Epistemological Promise of Externalism.

Stroud, B.: Scepticism and the Senses.

**Monday, 4th December 2017**

**9:30 – 12:30: Scepticism and the Restricted Scope of Sense Perception III**

Stroud, B.: Seeing What is So.

Stroud, B.: Perceptual Knowledge and the Primacy of Judgment.

**14:00 – 16:00: Causation and Necessity I**

Stroud, B.: *Engagement and Metaphysical Dissatisfaction*, ch. 1,2.

**16:30 – 18:30: Causation and Necessity II**

Stroud, B.: *Engagement and Metaphysical Dissatisfaction*, ch. 1,3.

Registration: [phd@philos.uzh.ch](mailto:phd@philos.uzh.ch)

Details: <http://www.philosophie.uzh.ch/doktorat/meisterkurse.html>

Venue: Philosophisches Seminar  
Zürichbergstrasse 43  
8044 Zürich

Room: ZUP-U-8

No fees apply. Participants are expected to have read the texts.

PhD students at the UZH are required to book the module in order to get credit points.