

The Ethics of Attention Course Syllabus

[please note this is subject to change]

Central European University, Summer University Course, Budapest, July 1-5, 2024

Directors / Core Faculty

Georgi Gardiner (The University of Tennessee)

Cathy Mason (Central European University)

Ella Whiteley (Sheffield University)

Preliminary Readings

Participants are asked to read all the texts **marked in bold** in the syllabus below. For those seeking an introductory text covering contemporary work on the philosophy of attention and salience, from which the syllabus below draws, we recommend the following:

Sophie Archer, 2022. *Saliience: A Philosophical Inquiry*, Routledge.

Completion Requirements

For all students, class attendance is mandatory. Completion of the program and the awarding of a certificate requires both class attendance and participation in the discussions.

July 1st: Metaphysics, Normativity, and Philosophical Traditions

9:30-11:00	1. Introductions, overview of course, and brainstorm of applied topics in the ethics of attention
Faculty	Georgi Gardiner
Teaching mode	We all introduce ourselves and our interests in attention. Gardiner describes course overview. The group brainstorms applied areas of significance to attention. This is an opportunity to learn about each other's research and to think broadly about domains that attention applies to.
Readings	<ol style="list-style-type: none">Gardiner, Georgi (2022) 'Attunement: On the Cognitive Virtues of Attention', in Mark Alfano, Colin Klein, and Jeroen de Ridder, eds, <i>Social Virtue Epistemology</i>, Routledge, 48–72. (A survey of applied topics for attention studies)Extracts from Munton, Jessie (ms in preparation) <i>Focusing the mind: the epistemology of salience and attention.</i>
11:00-11:15 Break	
11:15-12:45	2. Survey of Theories I: Metaphysics and Psychology of Attention
Faculty	Jessie Munton and Wayne Wu
Teaching mode	A "break it down for me" primer. Anonymous question asking system introduced, to avoid worries about so-called "stupid questions"
Readings	<ol style="list-style-type: none">Sections (to be specified soon) of Wu, Wayne (2023) <i>Movements of the Mind: A Theory of Attention, Intention and Action</i>, Oxford University Press.Watzl, Sebastian. (2023). "What Attention Is. The Priority Structure Account," <i>WIREs Cognitive Science</i>, 14(1), e1632.Mole, Christopher (2011) "The Metaphysics of Attention" in Christopher Mole, Declan Smithies, and Wayne Wu, eds., <i>Attention: Philosophical and Psychological Essays</i>, Oxford University Press, Ch. 3.

12:45-13:45 Lunch

13:45-15:15	3. Survey of Theories II: The Normativity of Attention
Faculty	Samantha Vice, Ella Whiteley and Cathy Mason
Teaching mode	A “break it down for me” primer. Group activity on what “The Normativity of Attention” means, since it can mean different things to people, especially people with different academic backgrounds.
Readings	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Siegel, Susanna (ms in preparation) “Are there norms of salience?”2. Saint-Croix, Catharine (2022) “Rumination and Wrongoing: The Role of Attention in Epistemic Morality,” <i>Episteme</i>, 19 (4):491-514.3. Wu, Wayne (2023) “On Attention and Norms: An Opinionated Review of Recent Work,” <i>Analysis Reviews</i>.

15:15-15:30 Break

15:30-17:00	4. Survey of Theories III: Comparing Three Traditions in Asian Philosophy
Faculty	Tatyana Kostochka
Teaching mode	A “break it down for me” primer. Group activity on different traditions in Asian philosophy that focus on attention, considering how those traditions diverge and converge. No background knowledge assumed.
Readings	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Sections (to be specified soon) of Ganeri, Jonardon (2017) <i>Attention, Not Self</i>. Oxford University Press.2. Sections (to be specified soon) from Sonam Kachru (ms in preparation) <i>The Shape of Mind and Life: Attention in Indian Buddhism</i>.3. Prueitt, Catherine (ms in preparation) “At the Limits of Pain: Attention, Exclusion, and Self-Knowledge in Pratyabhijñā Śaivism”

July 2nd: Virtues, Justice, Equality

9:30-11:00	5. Survey of Theories IV: Virtues and Attention
Faculty	Panel: Wayne Wu, Tatyana Kostochka, and Georgi Gardiner
Teaching mode	Quick survey of four influential ideas, followed by panel discussion. Group mock debate on roles of virtue in attention. Specifically, a debate regarding whether leading views are biased against disabled people.
Readings	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bommarito, Nicolas (2013) "Modesty as a Virtue of Attention," <i>Philosophical Review</i> 122(1): 93-117. 2. Tanesini, Alessandra (2020) "Ignorance, Arrogance, and Privilege," in Ian Kidd, Heather Battaly, and Quassim Cassam, eds., <i>Vice Epistemology and the Epistemology of Ignorance</i>, Routledge, Ch. 3. 3. Sections (to be specified soon) of Wu, Wayne (2023) <i>Movements of the Mind: A Theory of Attention, Intention and Action</i>, Oxford University Press.

11:00-11:15 Break

11:15-12:45	6. Advanced Participants' Projects I
Faculty	N/A. A course director will chair.
Teaching mode	Three participants who already have advanced projects in the philosophy of attention will sketch their idea. 15 minutes each.
Readings	The participants' essays will be circulated, but reading them is optional. N/A

12:45-13:45 Lunch

13:45-15:15	7. Advanced Participants' Projects II
Faculty	N/A. A course director will chair.
Teaching mode	Same as above: Three participants who already have advanced projects in the philosophy of attention will sketch their idea. 15 minutes each.
Readings	N/A

15:15-15:30 Break

15:30-17:00	8. Politics, Justice, & Equality I: Attentional Inequality & Power: Colonialism, Gender, & Labour
Faculty	Ella Whiteley
Teaching mode	Traditional lecture about how patterns of salience can cause or constitute discrimination, a harm, or an epistemic flaw, esp. how one can wrong a social group by having the wrong thing about them salient, mislead a person by making the wrong thing salient, or perpetuate colonial knowledge practices by making colonial texts and perspectives too salient. This research considers how attention might exacerbate existing inequalities, or constitute its own form of unequal treatment—and hinder democratic participation.
Readings	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Whiteley, Ella (2023) "A Woman First and a Philosopher Second: Relative Attentional Surplus on the Wrong Property", 133(4), 497-528. 2. Smith, Leonie and Archer, Alfred (2020) "Epistemic Injustice and the Attention Economy," <i>Ethical Theory and Moral Practice</i>, 23: 777-795. 3. Munton, Jessie (2021) "Prejudice as the Misattribution of Salience," <i>Analytic Philosophy</i>, 64(1): 1-19.

DAY 3

9:30-11:00	9. Politics, Justice, & Equality II: Powerful Institutions, the Commodification of Attention, and Collective Attention
Faculty	Georgi Gardiner and Ella Whiteley
Teaching mode	Reflection activity about what the attention crisis means to individual participants, leading to a broad discussion of how personal reflections can enhance philosophical theory. Questions asked will include whether we have—or should have—attentional rights, and what the role of academia is in attentional activism.
Readings	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Watzl, Sebastian and Browne, Katherine (ms in progress) “Attention as a Commodity: An Analysis and Ethical Assessment”. 2. Siegel, Susanna (2022). “Salience Principles for Democracy”. In: S. Archer, ed., <i>Salience: A Philosophical Inquiry</i>, Routledge. Ch. 13. 3. PBS interview with Johann Hari, author of <i>Stolen Focus</i>. 4. Sections (to be specified soon) of Wu, Tim (2017) <i>The Attention Merchants</i>. Penguin. (Or interview with author, TBD)
11:00-11:15 Break	
11:15-12:45	10. Politics, Justice, & Equality III: Bias and Prejudice
Faculty	Wayne Wu and Jessie Munton
Teaching mode	Survey the main ideas of how attention causes and manifests. Open discussion of human rights concerning our own attentional dispositions and how others are disposed to think of us and our demographic categories.
Readings	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Extracts (to be specified soon) from Gardiner, Georgi (ms in progress) “Against the New Ethics of Belief: The Morass of Moral Encroachment and Doxastic Partiality”. For the primer on the moral encroachment debate. 2. Sections (to be specified soon) of Munton, Jessie (ms in progress) <i>Focusing the mind: the epistemology of salience and attention</i>. 3. Whiteley, Ella (2022) “Harmful Salience Perspectives,” in Sophie Archer, <i>Salience: A Philosophical Inquiry</i>, Routledge, Ch. 11. 4. Mills, Charles W. (2007) “White Ignorance,” in Shannon Sullivan and Nancy Tuana, eds., <i>Race and Epistemologies of Ignorance</i>. SUNY Press, 11-38.
12:45-13:45 Lunch	
13:45-15:15	11. Politics, Justice, & Equality IV: Technology and Attentional Injustice
Faculty	Jessie Munton
Teaching mode	Break-it-down-for-me style teaching on search algorithms and informational prioritisation, followed by full-room round table discussion about the range of ways in which technology can manifest and perpetuate attentional prejudice, and the epistemic resources we have for describing the ways in which that is problematic.
Readings	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sections of Noble, Safiya Umoja (2018) <i>Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism</i>. NYU Press. 2. Munton, Jessie (2022) “Answering machines: how to (epistemically) evaluate a search engine,” <i>Inquiry</i>. 3. Introna, Lucas and Nissenbaum, Helen (2000). “Shaping the Web: Why the Politics of Search Engines Matters,” <i>The Information Society</i>, 16(3). 4. Irving, Zachary, McGrath, Catherine, Flynn, Lauren, Glasser and Mills, Caitlin (2022) “The shower effect: Mind wandering facilitates creative incubation during moderately engaging activities,” <i>Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts</i>.
15:15-15:30 Break	
15:30-17:00	12. Attention and the Good Life I: Iris Murdoch, Aesthetics and Attention

Faculty	Cathy Mason and Samantha Vice
Teaching mode	Session exploring the aesthetic notion of attention and the interrelations between this and the ethical notion of it, particularly focusing on the work of Iris Murdoch. Discussion of the role of 'disinterestedness' in art and ethics.
Readings	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Selections (to be specified soon) from Vice, Samantha, (forthcoming) <i>The Ethics of Animal Beauty</i>, Lexington Press Selected excerpts (to be specified soon) from illustrative art, music, and literature.2. Selections (to be specified soon) from Vice, Samantha, (forthcoming) <i>The Ethics of Animal Beauty</i>, Lexington Press3. Selections (to be specified soon) from Murdoch, Iris (1970) <i>The Sovereignty of Good</i>, Routledge.

DAY 4

9:30-11:00	13. Attention and the Good Life II: Friendship & Love Panel
Faculty	Georgi Gardiner, Cathy Mason, and Ella Whiteley
Teaching mode	Discussion of attentional demands of friendship, and how this bears on controversial theories about epistemic partiality, before a mock debate on the topic. Gardiner will also provide a quick break-it-down-for-me session on her attentional theory of limerence (that is, romantic infatuation that some theorists categorise as a mental health disorder).
Readings	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Brinkerhoff, Anna (2023) "The Cognitive Demands of Friendship," <i>Pacific Philosophical Quarterly</i>, 104(1): 101-123. 2. Sections (on doxastic partiality) of Gardiner, Georgi (ms in progress) "Against the New Ethics of Belief: The Morass of Moral Encroachment and Doxastic Partiality". 3. Sections of Heiti, Warren (2021) <i>Attending: An Ethical Art</i> (Vol. 82). McGill-Queen's University Press.
11:00-11:15 Break	
11:15-12:45	14. Attention and the Good Life III: Religion & Self Improvement
Faculty	Tatyana Kostochka
Teaching mode	Survey of roles of attention in religions worldwide. There will also be a student activity. Students will describe the roles for attention in religion in their lives / upbringing, and creatively brainstorm alternative ways attention could feature in religion, especially focusing on human flourishing, moral development, and resilience against emerging global issues.
Readings	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Carpenter, Amber (2018) "Attention as a Means of Self-Dissolution and Reformation", <i>Ratio</i>, 31(4): 376-388. 2. McRae, Emily (2012) "Ethics, Emotions, and Choice: Lessons from Tsongkhapa," <i>Journal of Buddhist Ethics</i>, 1(4): 99-121. 3. Smith, Sean (2021) Negation of Self in Indian Buddhist Philosophy, <i>Philosophers' Imprint</i>, 21(13).
12:45-13:45 Lunch	
13:45-15:15	15. Participant Works in Progress I
Faculty	N/A. A course director will chair.
Teaching mode	Five participants will sketch their new research idea in the ethics of attention. 10 minutes each.
Readings	These projects will be less developed than the "Advanced Participants' Projects" above. These sessions are designed for more embryonic research and participants who are at the earliest stage of their careers.
15:15-15:30 Break	
15:30-17:00	16. Participant Works in Progress II
Faculty	N/A. A course director will chair.
Teaching mode	Same as above: Five participants will sketch their new research idea in the ethics of attention. 10 minutes each.
Readings	Same as above.

DAY 5

9:30-11:00	17. Science & Global Health I: Mental Health & Attention, Disorders, and Interventions
Faculty	Jessie Munton and Tatyana Kostochka
Teaching mode	Discussion of moods, emotions, and attention. The focus will be on attentional flourishing and rights, including special focus on personal experiences and non-Western experiences of attentional health. Questions asked include the following: when are attentional patterns pathologies?; what can and should be done to enhance attentional flourishing or medicate attention?
Readings	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Kostochka, Tatyana (unpublished ms) "In Praise of Bad Moods." 2. Flores, Carolina (unpublished ms) "Rehabilitating reasoning in schizophrenia." 3. Kumar, Shitij (2020) "Psychosis as a state of aberrant salience," in Carol A. Tamminga Jim van Os, Ulrich Reininghaus, Elena Ivleva, eds, <i>Psychotic Disorders: Comprehensive Conceptualization and Treatments</i>, Oxford University Press, Ch. 49. 4. Peet, Andrew and Pitcovski, Eli (ms in progress) "Holding onto Grief."
11:00-11:15 Break	
11:15-12:45	18. Science & Global Health II: Media and the Public Understanding of Science
Faculty	Wayne Wu
Teaching mode	Session on global health and science communication, with a special focus on the pandemic and climate change. We will consider the ways in which the media shapes public attention in ways that distort, as well as aid, public understanding of core scientific issues. We will also consider issues regarding the type of power the media has in this regard, and how to make it more accountable.
Readings	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Selected excerpts (to be specified soon) from illustrative videos and media. 2. Selections (to be specified soon) of Siegel, Susanna (ms in progress) <i>Salience and Journalism</i>. 3. Sections (to be specified soon) of Lepoutre, Maxime, (2021) <i>Democratic Speech in Divided Times</i>, Oxford University Press. 4. Capurro, Gabriela, Jardine, Cynthia, Tustin, Jordin, and Driedger, Michelle (2021) "Communicating scientific uncertainty in a rapidly evolving situation: a framing analysis of Canadian coverage in early days of COVID-19," <i>BMC Public Health</i> 21, 2181.
12:45-13:45 Lunch	
13:45-15:15	19. Attention and the Natural World
Faculty	Samantha Vice
Teaching mode	Session on attention and the natural world, exploring the contribution a conception of attention can make towards understanding and improving our relationships with animals and the natural environment. In the light of anthropogenic climate change, a renewed attention on attention could reveal new ways of thinking about and improving our relations with the natural world.
Readings	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Selections (to be specified soon) from Vice, Samantha, (forthcoming) <i>The Ethics of Animal Beauty</i>, Lexington Press 2. Readings in environmental aesthetics: E.g., Alan Carlson and Emily Brady.
15:15-15:30 Break	
15:30-17:00	20. Summary Activity: Attention and Pedagogy: Building the Course Guides
Faculty	Led by Ella Whiteley and Selected Participants

Teaching mode	<p>Participants will co-design three syllabi (that is, reading lists and innovative classroom activities) for three new courses:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.) The Philosophy of Attention (Foundational Questions) 2.) Social Epistemology of Attention 3.) The Ethics and Aesthetics of Attention. <p>As a group, we might also decide to write other courses or modules, such as a.) Politics and Attention, b.) Rights and Attention, c.) Global Attentional Crises and their Solutions, and so on, as inspired by the course.</p> <p>Building these course guides in groups allows participants to review the main topics, and better understand what is most important about the topic. Participants will have been preparing for this activity. The resulting syllabi and activities—which will credit OSUN & CEU-SUN—will be featured at the American Philosophical Association’s (APA) Syllabus Showcase and the Center for Applied Epistemology (CAE) websites, for educators worldwide to draw on.</p>
Readings	N/A

Closing dinner: There will be a dinner open to all on the course, to close the event. Specifics will be announced in due course.