Categories, concepts and meanings
Categorization

- One of the most basic cognitive acts

- **Conceptual** categories
  - Learning
  - Planning
  - Communication
  - Economy

- **Generic** vs. Individual concepts
  - Generic ones serve to identify/characterize individuals
  - Experimental/theoretical work mostly with generic concepts
Conceptual Categories

- Can be looked at ...
  - as collections of individuals
    - category boundaries
    - graded centrality
  - from the point of view of the individuals that make up the category
  - through the level of categorization
    - Subcategories, relative properties

- Dominant view:
  - View as fixed entities with stable associations
  - ... more recently: dynamic construals
Classical model of category structure

- Definition by necessary and sufficient conditions/features
  - Aristotelian view
  - Mainstream analytic philosophy
  - Artificial Intelligence
  - Formal approaches

- e.g., COLT [EQUINE], [MALE], [YOUNG]

- Clear and rigid boundary to a category
Classical model of category structure (Cont’d)

- Many difficulties
  - Everyday concepts: necessary and sufficient conditions?
  - Graded centrality problem: some members are “better” than others
  - Boundaries: No account of why, in practice, they are vague and variable