

Sample Syllabus

Philosophy of Mind

Course Description: One of the most prominent questions in contemporary philosophy of mind is how consciousness fits into the physical world. A closely related question is how consciousness can be studied. In this course, we will look at both traditional and cutting-edge answers to these questions. We will begin by considering the mind-body problem: what kind of relationship does the mind have to the body? How does content about the world get into the mind? We will then address the nature of consciousness: what is consciousness? Is consciousness physical or non-physical? What would a theory of consciousness look like? We will end by considering recent contributions from neurophilosophers and philosophers of neuroscience that argue for the place of the mind in the physical world, and the kinds of challenges such philosophers face in making the case that the mind is the brain.

Objectives:

- gain an understanding of the philosophical issues surrounding consciousness
- improve skills in reading and interpreting philosophical works
- improve skills in critically evaluating arguments and discussing them constructively
- improve skills in philosophical writing

Assessment:

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| Participation | 10% |
| 6 Writing Assignments | 30% |
| Midterm Exam | 30% |
| Final Paper | 30% |

Participation

Students will be expected to contribute regularly to class discussions. You should come to class having read the week's readings, with comments and questions ready. The *quality* of your contributions is at least as important as the quantity: making one good point, or asking one interesting question is better than talking for a long time without making a point. Basic courtesy will be expected in all classroom interactions. Participation outside class also counts, including on the course blog, in office hours, and over email. Participation will include regular class activities, such as debates and group work.

Writing Assignments

Each week (with a few exceptions) one or two questions about the following week's readings will be posted to the course website. Choose one of the questions and write a short (2 page) critical essay answering it. More detailed instructions will be provided with each week's questions.

You must write 6 of these short essays. You may choose when to write your 6 essays as long as you write at least one before Week 4 and at least one after Week 10. Think through how you would respond to the posted questions even those for weeks when you are not submitting an essay. The final exam will consist largely of these weekly questions.

Midterm Exam

The exam will consist of several short essay questions. These will be based on the weekly essay questions. A good way to prepare for the exam is to write something every week, even when you aren't submitting an essay, and to participate in class discussions. Before the exam, revise what you wrote each week, taking into account what you learned in class.

Final Paper

The week after the midterm exam, a list of essay topics will be distributed. Choose a topic from the list, or in consultation with the instructor. One month before the paper is due, you must submit an abstract outlining your topic and basic arguments. This first stage is worth 5% of your grade. Two weeks before the paper is due, you must schedule a meeting with the instructor and bring to that meeting a detailed outline of your paper to discuss. This second stage (both the outline and your ability to discuss it) is worth another 5% of your grade. The remaining 20% of your grade will be based on the final paper, due in the last week of class.

Required Texts:

Jaegwon Kim, *Philosophy of Mind*, Second Edition. Westview Press, 2005.

David Chalmers, *Philosophy of Mind: Classical and Contemporary Readings*, Oxford University Press, 2002.

TOPICS

Dualism

Descartes, R., (1641), *Meditations on First Philosophy*, (C), pp. 10-21.

Descartes, R. (1649), *The Passions of the Soul* (excerpts) (C), pp. 21-23.

Kim, Chapter 1

Epiphenomenalism

Huxley, T. (1874), *On the Hypothesis that Animals are Automata, and Its History*, (C), pp. 24-30.

Smullyan, R., *An Unfortunate Dualist*, (C), p. 31.

Kim, Chapter 2

Mechanism and Emergentism

Broad, C.D., (1925), "Mechanism and Its Alternatives", (C), pp. 106-115.

Kim, Chapter 2 (cont.)

Behaviorism

Carnap, R., "Psychology in Physical Language", (C), pp. 39-44.

Skinner, B.F., "Excerpt from *About Behaviorism*", pp. 17-21.

Kim, Chapter 3

Problems with Behaviorism

Putnam, H., "Brains and Behavior", (C), pp. 45-54.

Kim, Chapter 3 (cont.)

Physicalism: The Identity Theory

Place, U.T., "Is Consciousness a Brain Process", (C), pp. 55-60.

Smart, J.J.C., "Sensations and Brain Processes", (C), pp. 60-68.

Physicalism and Reductionism

Putnam, H. and Oppenheim, P. (1958) "Unity of Science as a Working Hypothesis"
Ernst Nagel (1961), *The Structure of Science: Problems in the Logic of Scientific Explanation*
Kim, Chapter 9

Machine Functionalism

Understanding the Cognitive Revolution in Psychology
Putnam, H., "The Nature of Mental States", (C), pp. 73-79.
Kim, Chapter 4

Reductionism and Anti-Reductionism

Fodor, J., "Special Sciences (or: The Disunity of Science as a Working Hypothesis)"
Kim, J., "Multiple Realization and the Metaphysics of Reduction"
Kim, Chapter 9 (cont.)

Anomalous Monism and Supervenience (1970)

Davidson, D., "Mental Events", (C), pp. 116-125.
Kim, Chapter 6

Intentionality, Representations and the Propositional Attitudes

Brentano, F., *The Distinction Between Mental and Physical Phenomena* (C), 479-483.
Fodor, J., "Propositional Attitudes", (C), pp. 542-555.
Kim, Chapter 8

The Computational Theory of Mind

Pylyshyn, Zenon, 1980. "Computation and Cognition: Issues in the Foundation of Cognitive Science," *The Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 3: 111-132.

Modularity of Mind

Fodor, J. Excerpts from *Modularity of Mind*. (Online)
Scholl, B. J. and Leslie, A. M. (1999). Modularity, development and 'theory of mind'. *Mind & Language*, 14, 131-153.

Mental Causation and Causal Exclusion

Kim, Chapter 6
Kim, J., (1989), "The Many Problems of Mental Causation", (C), pp. 170-179.
Yablo, S., (1992), "Mental Causation", (C), pp. 179-196.

Consciousness and Qualia

Kim, Chapter 7
Nagel, T., (1974) "What is it Like to be a Bat?", (C), pp. 219-226.
Dennett, D., "Quining Qualia" (1988), (C), pp. 226-246.
Jackson, F., "Epiphenomenal Qualia", (C), pp. 273-280.

Consciousness: Types of "consciousness"

Block, N., "Concepts of Consciousness", (C), pp. 206-218.
Rosenthal, D. "Explaining Consciousness", (C), pp. 406-421.
Kim, Chapter 7

Consciousness: Prospects for a Science of Consciousness from a Functionalist Perspective

Block, N. , “Concepts of Consciousness”, (C), pp. 206-218.

Chalmers, D. “How Can We Construct a Science of Consciousness?”

Cognitive Extension

Clark, A. & Chalmers, D. “The Extended Mind” (C), pp. 643-653.

Adams and Aizawa (2001). “The Bounds of Cognition,” *Philosophical Psychology*, 14(1): 43–64.

Criticisms of Functionalism or Strong AI

Block, N., “Problems with Functionalism”, (C), pp. 94-98.

Searle, J. “Can Computers Think”, (C), pp. 669-675.

Neurophilosophy, Mind-Brain Identity and Reduction (The First Wave)

Churchland, P.S., (1981) “Mind-Brain Reduction: New Light from the Philosophy of Science”.

Churchland, P.S. & Churchland P., "Intertheoretic Reduction: A Neuroscientist's Field Guide", (1991) in Bechtel Reprinted: (2002) in B. Bechtel, et al, eds., *Philosophy and the Neurosciences: A Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell).

Neurophilosophy, Propositional Attitudes & Representation

Churchland, P., “Eliminative Materialism and the Propositional Attitudes”, (C), pp. 568-580.

Akins, K., (1996), “Of Sensory Systems and the Aboutness of Mental States”, *The Journal of Philosophy* 93(7): 337-372.

Neurophilosophy and Consciousness

Churchland, P.S. (1994) “Can Neurobiology Teach us Anything about consciousness?”, *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 67(4): 23-40.

Attack on the Argument from Multiple Realizability

Bechtel W. & Mundale, J. (1999) “Multiple Realizability Revisited: Linking Cognitive and Neural States”, *Philosophy of Science* 66(2): 175-207.

Shapiro, L. (2000), “Multiple Realizations” *Journal of Philosophy* 97(12): 635-654.

New Reductionism: Reduction in Practice

Bickle, J. (2006), “Reducing mind to molecular pathways: explicating the reductionism implicit in current cellular and molecular neuroscience”, *Synthese* 151: 411-434.

New Reductionism: New Mechanism

Machamer P., Darden, L. & Craver, C. (2000) “Thinking About Mechanisms”, *Philosophy of Science* 67: 1-25.

Craver, C. (2001), “Role Functions, Mechanisms and Hierarchy”, *Philosophy of Science* 68(1): 53-74.

Problems with the New Reductionism

Sullivan, J. (2009) “The Multiplicity of experimental protocols: A Challenge to Reductionist and Nonreductionist models of the unity of neuroscience”, *Synthese* 167: 511-539.

Stinson, C. (2015) “Mechanisms in psychology: Ripping nature at its seams” *Synthese*.