

Philosophy 462
Fall, 2023

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Office hours – Tuesdays, 2-3pm (i.e., after class) or by appointment

PHILOSOPHY OF MIND

What is a mind, and how do minds relate to the physical universe? In the first part of this course, we'll consider some classic approaches to answering these questions, asking (e.g.) whether our minds are simply *our brains*. We'll then turn to the perplexing nature of conscious experience. When you look at a tomato there is something it is like to experience its redness and roundness. But what exactly does this amount to? And could there be a science of such experiences? For instance, could neuroscience tell us whether your red experiences are like my green experiences, or whether your friend's cat has experiences of its own? Finally, we will consider mental states which purport to be about things in the world; for instance, your belief that *it's raining* or your desire to *race snails*. Are these just little sentences in your head, or could your iPhone also store your beliefs and thoughts about the world? How would we know?

Course Reading:

Each week, you will be assigned papers or book chapters to read. These are all available on Blackboard.

I only assign readings that are written by clever people. If a reading seems silly, or obviously false, it's not; take a step back and try to think carefully about the ideas being put forward and the specific reasons why the author endorses them. If – after thinking hard and charitably – a paper still seems wrong, or misguided, you might have a good objection! This is great! Please raise it in class or come discuss during my office hours!

If you would like more background on any of the topics we discuss, the following textbooks are excellent:

Kim, J. (2010) *Philosophy of Mind* (3rd Edition). (Particularly helpful for part 1 of the course)

Crane, T. (2016) *The Mechanical Mind* (3rd Edition). Routledge. (Particularly helpful for part 3 of the course)

The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy is also a fantastic resource, although the articles vary in difficulty and clarity.

Less authoritative, but often easier as an entry point, are articles on *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

Course Assessment:

Your work will be assessed based on:

- (1) Two 6-8 page papers (each worth 25% of your final grade, and each pertaining to parts one and two of the course)
- (2) Ten 1-page responses to the week's readings (worth 10% of your final grade)
- (3) One 10-12 page paper (worth 40% of your final grade – due December 13th)
- (3) Class attendance and participation in class discussion can raise a borderline grade.

In all assignments, it is completely unacceptable to use the words or ideas of someone else without proper acknowledgment. If you are unsure what counts as plagiarism, see the Trojan Integrity Guide at <https://policy.usc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Code-of-Integrity-and-Accountability-Online-Version-FINAL-7-21-2022.pdf> and the Undergraduate Guide for Avoiding Plagiarism at <https://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/plagiarism>.

No less egregious is the use of ChatGPT. ChatGPT is very impressive and can produce nicely written essays that are often riddled with factual errors and bizarre statements. It's really important for me to be able to check that *you* wrote your essays/responses, and not ChatGPT. **As such, you should be able to provide evidence to this effect.** While this is a pain for all involved, I recommend the following:

- You could write your essays/assignments on Google Docs. This will automatically save each change that is made to the file, thereby documenting its development (with the added bonus of automatically backing up your work!)
- You could keep notes, essay plans, or earlier drafts, and be ready to share these (in general, the more you redraft and plan an essay, the better it will be - it's often helpful to save drafts as separate documents anyway to permit bigger structural changes, etc.)
- You could come to my office hours to discuss the ideas you're developing.

If you are unable to provide evidence of this sort, you will be asked to perform a mini-viva, where I will put you on the spot, and ask you about various aspects of your writing (but it shouldn't come to this if you take the above steps). *I am sorry about having to do this!*

Other General Policies:

Please don't use your laptops or other electronic devices in class – the internet is too tempting, and it will distract you. There is also evidence that you will remember your notes better if they are taken by hand: <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/a-learning-secret-don-t-take-notes-with-a-laptop/>

Students with Disabilities

Students requesting academic accommodations based on a disability should register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) and email me about the requested accommodations. (DSP is located in GFS 120 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number is (213) 740-0776. See also <https://osas.usc.edu>.) Please get in touch if I can help.

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Weekly readings and topics for discussion

(Further readings are marked with a ‘*’)

Part 1: What is a mind? Contemporary views and their antecedents

Week 1: Introduction, then Substance dualism and its difficulties.

READINGS:

- (T) No reading – introduction to the course
- (Th) Descartes, R., *Meditations II, VI; Passions of the Soul* (excerpt).
Elisabeth of Bohemia, *Correspondence with Descartes* (6.v.1643, 10.v.1643)
*Kim, J. *Philosophy of Mind*, Chapters 1-2.

Week 2: Behaviorism.

READINGS:

- (T) Ryle, G., ‘Descartes’ Myth’
Carnap, R. ‘Psychology in Physical Language’
* Kim, J. *Philosophy of Mind*, Chapter 3.
- (Th) Ryle, G. *The Concept of Mind*, Ch. 5.
Putnam, H., “Brains and Behavior”
* Kim, J. *Philosophy of Mind*, Chapter 3.

Week 3: The type-identity thesis.

READINGS:

- (T) Smart, J.J.C., ‘Sensations and Brain Processes’
Feigl, H., ‘The “Mental” and the “Physical”’
Armstrong, ‘The Causal Theory of the Mind’
* Kim, J. *Philosophy of Mind*, Chapter 4.
- (Th) Lewis, D. ‘An Argument for the Identity Theory’
*Lewis, D., ‘Psychophysical and Theoretical Identifications’

Week 4: Functional specification and role-functionalism.

READINGS:

- (T) Putnam, H. ‘The Nature of Mental States’
Block, N. ‘Troubles With Functionalism’, particularly Intro, 1.1 and 1.2
*Levin, J. ‘Functionalism’, sections 1, 3-4
* Find somewhere to watch ‘The measure of a man’ (Star Trek episode)
- (Th) Kim, J., ‘The Many Problems of Mental Causation’, pp. 173-79
Polger, T. ‘Are Sensations Still Brain Processes?’, Section 4.
* Kim, J. *Philosophy of Mind*, Chapters 5-6.

First 6-8 page paper (on Part 1 of the course) due Thursday of Week 5.

Part 2: Perplexities of Conscious Experience

Week 5: Is consciousness a counterexample to physicalism?

READINGS:

- (T) Jackson, F., 'Epiphenomenal Qualia' (Ch. 28)
Chalmers, D. 'Consciousness and its Place in Nature', secs. 1-3 (Ch.27)
*Chalmers, D. 'Facing up to the Problem of Consciousness', secs. 1-4
*Nagel, T., 'What Is It Like to Be a Bat?'
- (Th) Levin, J., 'Do Conceivability Arguments against Physicalism Beg the Question?'
*Balog, K., 'Conceivability, Possibility, and the Mind-Body Problem'
*Levin, J., 'Could love be like a heatwave?: Physicalism and the subjective character of experience'

Week 6: Can there be a science of consciousness?

READINGS:

- (T) Block, N. 'On a confusion about a function of consciousness'
Cohen, M. & Dennett, D. 'Consciousness cannot be separated from function'
*Shea, N. 'Methodological encounters of phenomenal kind'
- (Th) Phillips, I. 'Perception and Iconic Memory: What Sperling Doesn't Show'
Block, N. 'Perceptual consciousness overflows cognitive access'
*Phillips, I. 'No watershed for overflow: recent work on the richness of consciousness'
*Sperling, G. 'The information available in brief visual presentations'

Weeks 7-8: The scope of perceptual consciousness

READINGS:

- (T) Irvine, E. 'Measures of consciousness'
Shea, N. 'Methodological encounters of phenomenal kind'
*Irvine, E. 'Old problems with new measures in the science of consciousness'
*Shea, N. & Bayne, T. 'The vegetative state and the science of consciousness'
- (Th) Siegel, S. 'Which properties are represented in perception?'
Price, R. 'Aspect-switching and visual phenomenal character'
*Hawley, K. & Macpherson, F. Introduction to 'The Admissible Contents of Experience'
- (T) Block, N. 'Seeing-as in the light of vision science'
Helton, G.. 'Recent issues in high-level perception'
* Phillips, I. & Firestone, C. 'Visual adaptation and the purpose of perception'
*Burr, D., & Ross, J. 'A visual sense of number' (Try the demos!)
*Yousif, S., Clarke, S., & Brannon, E. 'Number Adaptation: A Critical Look'
- (Th) Fall Recess – no class

Week 9: Alien experiences

READINGS:

- (T) Nagel, T., 'What Is It Like to Be a Bat?'
Akins, K., 'What is it like to be boring and myopic?'
- (Th) Birch, J. 'The search for invertebrate consciousness'
Andrews, K. 'All animals are conscious'

Second 6-8 page paper due Thursday of Week 10

Part 3: Representations and Intentional States

Week 10: Folk Psychology

READINGS:

- (T) Fodor, J. Chapter 1 of 'Psychosemantics'
Churchland, P., 'Eliminative Materialism and the Propositional Attitudes'
*Clarke, S. & Beck, J. 'Border disputes'
- (Th) Dennett, D. 'True Believers'
Peacocke, C. *Sense and Content*, Chapter 8.
*Block, N. 'Mind as the software of the brain'

Week 11: Mental representation

READINGS:

- (T) Fodor, J. 'Why there still has to be a language of thought'
Camp, E. 'Thinking with maps'
*Camp, E. 'A language of baboon thought?'
- (Th) Clark, A. 'Connectionism' (chapter 4 of *Mindware*)
Fodor, J. & McLaughlin, B. 'Connectionism and the problem of systematicity'
*Beck, J. 'The generality constraint and the structure of thought'

Week 12: Rationality and Belief

READINGS:

- (T) Helton, G. 'If you can't change what you believe, you don't believe it'
Mandelbaum, E. & Quilty-Dunn, J. 'Believing without reason, or: Why liberals shouldn't watch Fox News'
- (Th) Gendler, T. 'Alief and Belief'
Kahneman, D. Excerpt from 'Thinking, fast and slow'

Week 13: Externalism

READINGS:

(T) Burge, T. 'Individualism and the Mental'
Farkas, K. 'Semantic internalism and externalism'

(Th) Clark, A. & Chalmers, D. 'The extended mind'
Gertler, B. 'Overextending the Mind'
*Nolan, C. (director) 'Memento' (FILM)

Week 14-15: Perceptual representation

READINGS:

(T) Burge, T. 'Perception: Where mind begins'
Soteriou, M. 'Representational Content, the Science of Perception, and Disjunctivism about Conscious Character'
*Clark, A. & Toribio, J. 'Doing without representing?'

(Th) No class

(T) Kosslyn, S. et. 'The Case for Mental Imagery: ch1'
Pylyshyn, Z. 'Return of the mental image: are there really pictures in the head?'
* Treisman, A. 'Features and Objects in Visual Processing'
* Shepard, R. N., & Metzler, J. 'Mental rotation of three-dimensional objects.'

(Th) Summing up– No further reading

Final 10-12 page paper due December 13th