

Course: Philosophy of Mind

Instructor: Brandon Ashby

1. Textbooks and reading materials

Required:

David Chalmers' (ed.) (2002) *Philosophy of Mind: Classical and Contemporary Readings*, New York: Oxford University Press.

Recommended:

David Braddon-Mitchell's and Frank Jackson's (2007) *Philosophy of Mind and Cognition: An Introduction*, 2nd edition, Oxford: Blackwell.

All other required reading will be made available as PDFs on the course website.

2. What is Philosophy of Mind?

We believe things. We desire things. We feel things. And we perceive things.

Moreover, we can use our understanding of the beliefs, desires, emotions, and perceptions of others to predict and explain their behavior. For example, if I know:

- that philosophy of biology classes are only offered every two years in the spring,
- that the philosophy of biology is always taught on Tuesdays and Thursdays in the afternoon, and
- that my friend is really interested in taking philosophy of biology,

then I can predict with surprising accuracy where my friend will be on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons *two years from now*. By way of comparison, even the most advanced meteorologists struggle to accurately predict the weather more than a few days in advance. Yet the human brain is the most complex physical system in the known universe. From this perspective, it is practically a miracle just how well we can predict one another's behavior. How is it that folk psychology (our everyday understanding of each other's beliefs, desires, emotions, and perceptions) works so well?

We also have good reason to think that we are purely physical systems. Our bodies and brains are composed of electrons and protons and neutrons. This is the same stuff that bricks, toaster ovens, and moss are made out of. So, when you get enough particles together and you arrange them in the right way, you can create something that believes, desires, feels, and perceives. But how!? How is it that we can take the same basic stuff that bricks, toaster ovens, and moss are made out of and make it *think*? Give it a perspective on the world? And make it suffer or hope? Of course, some philosophers have claimed that our minds cannot be purely physical systems. But, if that is the case, then how does the non-material mind relate to the material brain? We will address these questions and others in this class.

3. Assignments

- Micro-exams, worth 40% of your final grade.
- Essays, worth 50% of your final grade.
- Syllabus quiz, worth 2.5% of your final grade.
- Discussion forum questions, worth 7.5% of your final grade.

3.1 Micro-exams:

You will have a micro-exam every week. Micro-exams can cover any course material (lectures, readings, in-class discussions) presented in the last four weeks of the course. You will have two attempts to take each micro-exam. You will receive the highest score of your two attempts. I drop your two lowest micro-exam scores. Micro-exams will be worth 40% of your final grade. Micro-exams will be administered online via the course website. You will be able to see what questions you got wrong on a micro-exam, but you will not be told the answers to the questions.

3.2 Essays:

You will have three essays over the course of the term. Each will be 2500 words in length. You will have the option of submitting a draft of each paper before you submit it for a final grade. The essays are worth 50% of your final grade and are evenly weighted. I do not drop any essay scores. However, if you are satisfied with the grade that you receive on your first two essays, then you have the option of applying your combined score on your first two essays to your third essay. In other words, do well-enough on your first two essays and you don't have to do the third. I do this to encourage you to work hard on your first two essays and polish them.

3.3 Syllabus quiz:

You will have a quiz on the syllabus and the structure of the course at the end of your first week of term. It is worth 2.5% of your final grade.

3.4 Discussion forum questions:

The class will be divided into two groups. You'll get your group number on the first day of class. For every reading, one of the two groups will be required to post or upvote three questions about that reading on the course website. Discussion forum questions will be worth 7.5% of your final grade. Your questions must be uploaded before 11:59PM the day before we discuss that reading in class. Your questions will be listed anonymously. Only I will be able to see your names attached to the questions. So, do not worry about asking "dumb" questions in front of the other students.

4. Course Schedule

Graded assignments are listed in red and are underlined.

Readings that are listed in footnotes are recommended but are not required.

Week 1: Behaviorism and the Identity Theory¹

- Textbook: Gilbert Ryle's 'Descartes' Myth' pp. 32-38.
- Textbook: Hilary Putnam's 'Brains and Behavior' pp. 45-54.
- Textbook: U.T. Place's 'Is Consciousness a Brain Process?' pp. 55-59 and J.J.C. Smart's 'Sensations and Brain Processes' pp. 60-68.
- Micro-exam 1

¹ Recommended: Ch. 2 and 6 of David Braddon-Mitchell's and Frank Jackson's (2007) *Philosophy of Mind and Cognition: An Introduction*, 2nd edition, Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 37-47.

Week 2: Functionalism²

- Textbook: Hilary Putnam's 'The Nature of Mental States' pp. 73-79.
- Textbook: David Lewis's 'Psychophysical and Theoretical Identifications' pp. 88-93.
- Textbook: Ned Block's 'Troubles with Functionalism' (excerpt) pp. 99-105.
- [Micro-exam 2](#)

Week 3: Reduction and Supervenience

- Textbook: Jerry Fodor's 'Special Sciences (or: The Disunity of Science as a Working Hypothesis)' pp. 126-134.
- Course website: Daniel Dennett's (1991) 'Real Patterns' *Journal of Philosophy*, 88(1): 27-51.
- Textbook: Jaegwon Kim's 'Multiple Realization and the Metaphysics of Reduction' pp. 135-149.
- [Micro-exam 3](#)

Week 4: Mental Causation

- Course website: Jaegwon Kim's 'The Many Problems of Mental Causation' pp. 170-178.
- Karen Bennett's (2003) 'Why the Exclusion Problem Seems Intractable, and How, Just Maybe, to Tract It', *Nous*, 37(3): 471-497.
- Course website: Ned Block's (2003) 'Do Causal Powers Drain Away?', *Philosophical and Phenomenological Research*, 67(1): 133-150.
- Course website: Jackson and Pettit's (1990) 'Program Explanation: A general perspective' *Analysis*, 50(2):107-117.
- [Micro-exam 4](#)

Week 5: The Propositional Attitudes Part 1

- Course website: Jerry Fodor's (1978) 'Propositional Attitudes', *The Monist*, 61(October): 501-23.
- Course website: Daniel Dennett's (1981) 'True Believers: The Intentional strategy and Why It Works', reprinted in his (1987) *The Intentional Stance*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, pp. 13-36.³
- Textbook: Paul Churchland's (1981) 'Eliminativism and the Propositional Attitudes', pp. 568-580.
- [Micro-exam 5](#)

Week 6: The Propositional Attitudes Part 2

- Course website: Elisabeth Camp's (2007) 'Thinking with maps', *Philosophical Perspectives*, 21(1): 145-182.⁴
- Course website: Zenon Plylyshyn's 'What's in your Mind?'.

³ Recommended: Ch. 2 of Tadeusz Zawidzki's (2007) *Dennett*, Oxford: Oneworld Publications.

⁴ Recommended: Chapter 10 of David Braddon-Mitchell's and Frank Jackson's (2007) *Philosophy of Mind and Cognition: An Introduction*, 2nd edition, Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 171-184.*

- Course website: Robert Matthews' (2011) 'Measurement-Theoretic Accounts of Propositional Attitudes' *Philosophy Compass*, 6(11): 828-841.
- [Micro-exam 6](#)

Week 7: Content Externalism and Two-Dimensional Semantics

- Textbook: Hillary Putnam 'The Meaning of 'meaning'' (excerpt) 581-597.
- Textbook: Ruth Garrett Millikan's (1989) 'Biosemantics' pp. 500-508.
- Textbook: David Chalmers' 'The Components of Content (revised version)' pp. 608-633.
- [First Essay is Due.](#)
- [Micro-exam 7](#)

Week 8: Consciousness Part 1

- Textbook: Thomas Nagel's 'What is it like to be a bat?' pp. 219-225.
- Textbook: Ned Block's 'Concepts of Consciousness' pp. 206-219.
- Textbook: Joseph Levine's 'Materialism and Qualia: The Explanatory Gap' pp. 354-361.
- [Micro-exam 8](#)

Week 9: Consciousness Part 2

- Textbook: David Chalmers' 'Consciousness and its Place in Nature' pp. 247-272.
- Course website: David Chalmers' (1995) 'Facing up to the Problem of Consciousness' reprinted in his (2010) *The Character of Consciousness*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 3-27.
- Textbook: Daniel Dennett's 'Quining Qualia' pp. 226-246.
- [Micro-exam 9](#)

Week 10: Consciousness Part 3: The Knowledge Argument

- Textbook: Frank Jackson's 'What Mary Didn't Know' pp. 273-280.
- Textbook: David Lewis's 'What Experience Teaches' pp. 281-294.
- Textbook: Brian Loar's (2002) 'Phenomenal States (second version)' pp. 295-310.
- [Micro-exam 10](#)

Week 11: The Relationship between Consciousness and Intentionality

- Course website: Ch. 6 of Jaegwon Kim's (2005) *Physicalism or Something Near Enough*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, pp. 149-174.
- Textbook: Terence Horgan's and 'The Intentionality of Phenomenology and the Phenomenology of Intentionality' pp. 520-533.
- Course website: William G. Lycan's (2001) 'The Case for Phenomenal Externalism' *Noûs*, 35: pp. 17-35.
- [Second essay is due.](#)
- [Micro-exam 11](#)

Week 12: Perception Part 1

- Course website: Peter Strawson's 'Imagination and Perception' in his (1974) *Freedom and Resentment and Other Essays*, London: Routledge, pp. 50-72.
- Course website: Richard Gregory's (1974) 'Perceptions as Hypotheses' *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London. Series B, Biological Sciences*, 290(1038): 181-197.

- Course website: Daniel Dennett's (1996) 'Seeing is Believing—Or is it?' in Kathleen Akins (ed.) *Perception*, Vancouver Studies in Cognitive Science vol. 5 Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 158-172.

- [Micro-exam 12](#)

Week 13: Perception Part 2

- Course website: Paul Bach-y-Rita's (2002) 'Sensory Substitution and Qualia', in A. Noë's and Evan Thompson's *Vision and Mind: Selected Readings in the Philosophy of Perception*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, pp. 497-514.
- Course website: A. David Milner's and Melvyn A. Goodale's (1998) 'The Visual Brain in Action' reprinted in A. Noë's and Evan Thompson's (eds.) *Vision and Mind: Selected Readings in the Philosophy of Perception*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, pp. 515-529.
- Course website: David Lewis's (1980) 'Veridical Hallucination and Prosthetic Vision', and (1986) 'Postscript to 'Veridical Hallucination and Prosthetic Vision'', in his (1986) *Philosophical Papers*, Volume II, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 273-290.

- [Micro-exam 13](#)

Week 14: Perception Part 3 & The Unity of Consciousness

- Course website: Selections from Maurice Merleau-Pony's *Phenomenology of Perception*, (2012) London: Routledge.
- Course website: Thomas Nagel's (1971) 'Brain Bisection and the Unity of Consciousness', *Synthese*, 22(May): 396-413.
- Course website: Tim Bayne's (2008) 'The Unity of Consciousness and the Split-Brain Syndrome' *The Journal of Philosophy*, 105(6): 277-300.

- [Micro-exam 14](#)

Week 15: Vehicular Externalism

- Textbook: Andy Clark's and David Chalmers' 'The Extended Mind' pp. 643-652.
- Course website: J. Kevin O'Regan's and Alva Noë's (2001) 'A sensorimotor account of vision and visual consciousness', *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 24: 939-973.
- Course website: Ned Block's (2005) 'Review of Alva Noë, *Action and Perception*' *Journal of Philosophy*, 102: 259-272.

- [Third essay is due.](#)

- [Micro-exam 15](#)

Week 16: Fall/Spring Break [MOVE TO APPROPRIATE DATE]

- No assigned material