Philosophy of Mind:
Minds, Machines, and Consciousness

William A. Bauer, Ph.D.

This is my model syllabus for an advanced undergraduate philosophy of mind course.

Course Overview
This is an advanced undergraduate course in the philosophy of mind. We will seek answers to these questions: What is the metaphysical relationship between the mind and the body (or brain)? Do all mental events or properties reduce to physical events or properties? What is consciousness, and what is the nature of subjectivity? Can machines think, understand, or be conscious—and if so, in what sense?

Roughly, half the course is devoted to studying major theories on offer in the philosophy of mind, including various dualist theories, behaviorism and its descendants, functionalism, and central state materialism. The other half of the course is devoted to examining consciousness in various aspects, and the possibility of artificial intelligence, from both the classical computational perspective and the connectionist point of view.

The general goals of this course are the following: (i) for you to become acquainted with and increase your capacity to analyze concepts pertinent to the philosophy of mind, (ii) increase your ability to both critique and develop arguments pertaining to philosophical concerns about the nature of the mind, and (iii) come to better understand opposing philosophical views and critically develop your own views about issues in the philosophy of mind. These goals will be accomplished through intensive reading assignments and a seminar-style classroom environment consisting of both and lecture, class discussions, and small-group discussions within class. Achievement of these goals will be measured by essay assignments and exams.

Course Grade
There are two essay assignments, each in two drafts, with the final draft being about 7-10 pages long. Each first draft is worth 5%, and each second draft is worth 45%. The first essay will be on a topic chosen from those covered in the first half of the course, and the second will be on a topic chosen from those covered in the second half of the course.

Your active engagement in this class is required. You should be prepared to participate in class discussions as much as possible. You will be better able to participate if you read the assignments carefully – you should try to read them twice. The course will involve some work in small groups inside class, and this is aimed at facilitating class discussion. You are required to attend all classes.

Course Materials
All course readings will be made available through the course website (with links there directly to PDF’s, online readings, or electronic reserves available through the university library).
Reading Schedule

PART I: Some Theories of the Mind (6 sub-units over 9 weeks)

Cartesian Dualist Interactionism (1 week)


Behaviorism and Its Critique (2 weeks)


Central State Materialism (1 week)


Functionalism (2 weeks)


**Non-Reductive Materialism** (2 weeks)


**Folk Psychology (The Intentional Stance) and Eliminativism** (1 week)


**PART II: Consciousness and Qualia** (3 weeks)


**PART III: The Computational and Connectionist Approaches** (3 weeks)


