

# **Philosophy of Mind: Minds, Machines, and Consciousness**

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*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)**

1. Rene Descartes, *Meditations* II and IV.  
Available freely at <http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/>, trans. Jonathan Bennett.
2. Rene Descartes, *Passions of the Soul* (selections).  
Available freely at <http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/>, trans. Jonathan Bennett.
3. Raymond M. Smullyan, "An Unfortunate Dualist." In *This Book Needs No Title*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall. 1980.

#### **Behaviorism and Its Critique (2 weeks)**

1. John B. Watson, "Psychology as a Behaviorist Views It." *Psychological Review*, 20. 158-77. 1913.
2. B.F. Skinner, selections from *Science and Human Behavior*. New York: Macmillan. 1953.
3. Gilbert Ryle, "Descartes' Myth." In *The Concept of Mind*. London: Hutchinson. 1949.
4. Noam Chomsky, "A Review of B.F. Skinner's Verbal Behavior." *Language*, 35. 26-58. 1959.
5. Daniel Dennett, "Skinner Skinned." In *Brainstorms*. MIT Press. 1981.
6. Wilfrid Sellars, selection from "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind." Harvard: Harvard University Press. 1997.

#### **Central State Materialism (1 week)**

1. J.J.C. Smart, "Sensations and Brain Processes." *Philosophical Review* LXVIII. 141-56. 1959.
2. U.T. Place, "Is Consciousness a Brain Process?" *British Journal of Psychology* 47. 44-50. 1956.

#### **Functionalism (2 weeks)**

1. Aristotle, selection from *On the Soul*.  
Available freely at <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/soul.html>, trans. J.A. Smith.
2. Hilary Putnam, "The Nature of Mental States." In W.H. Capitan & D.D. Merrill, eds., *Art, Mind, and Religion*. Pittsburgh University Press. 1967.
3. David Lewis, "Psychophysical and Theoretical Identifications." *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 50. 249-58. 1972.

4. Ned Block, "Troubles with Functionalism." *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science*, 9. 261-325. 1978.

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

1. Donald Davidson, "Mental Events." In Lawrence Foster & J.W. Swanson, eds., *Experience and Theory*. London: Duckworth. 1970.
2. Jerry Fodor, "Special Sciences." *Synthese* 28, 97-115. 1974.
3. Jaegwon Kim, "Multiple Realization and the Metaphysics of Reduction." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 52(1). 1-26. 1992.
4. Terence Horgan, "From Supervenience to Superdupervenience: Meeting the Demands of a Material World." *Mind* 102. 555-86. 1993.

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

1. Daniel Dennett, "True Believers: The Intentional Strategy and Why it Works." In *The Intentional Stance*. MIT Press. 1989.
2. Paul Churchland, "Eliminative Materialism and the Propositional Attitudes." *Journal of Philosophy*, 78. 67-90. 1981.

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

1. Thomas Nagel, "What is it Like to Be a Bat?" *Philosophical Review*, 83(4). 435-50. 1974.
2. Daniel Dennett, "Quining Qualia." In A. Marcel & E. Bisiach, eds., *Consciousness in Modern Science*, Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1988.
3. David Chalmers, "Consciousness and Its Place in Nature." In S. Stich and F. Warfield, *Blackwell Guide to the Philosophy of Mind*. Blackwell. 2003.
4. Frank Jackson, "Epiphenomenal Qualia." *Philosophical Quarterly* 32, 127-36. 1982.
5. David Lewis, "What Experience Teaches." *Proceedings of the Russellian Society*, University of Sydney, 13. 29-57. 1988.
6. Colin McGinn, "Can We Solve the Mind-Body Problem?" *Mind* 98. 349-66. 1989.

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

1. Daniel Dennett, "Artificial Intelligence as Philosophy and Psychology." In *Brainstorms*. MIT Press. 1981.
2. Alan Turing, "Computing Machinery and Intelligence." *Mind*, LIX. 433-460. 1950.

3. "John Searle, "Minds, Brains, and Programs." *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 3. 417-424. 1980.
4. J.R. Lucas, "Minds, Machines, and Gödel." *Philosophy*, 36. 112-127. 1965.
5. Hubert Dreyfus, selections from *What Computers Still Can't Do*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999 (sixth edition).
6. Paul Churchland, "On the Nature of Theories: A Neurocomputational Perspective." In C.W. Savage, ed., *Theories: Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science*, XIV. 1990.
7. Jay Rosenberg, "Connectionism and Cognition." *Bielefeld Report*. 1989.