PHIL 306: Philosophy of Mind

Fall 2016, MWF, 8:35—9:25, Currie 408/9
(Note: Conferences will replace the Friday lecture starting the week of Sep 12-16)

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Office hrs: Fridays 13:00-15:00, or by appointment
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Introduction:
In this course, we will examine some of the major questions concerning the nature and functioning of
the mind, as discussed in contemporary philosophy and cognitive science. What exactly is a mind?
Where is it located? What is it composed of? How is it organized? How does it work? What are its
limitations? We will look at a number of theories that attempt to answer various aspects of these
questions, and we will zero in on a number of current philosophical debates that have grown out of
and intertwined with these discussions. Some of the specific issues we will encounter include:
  o Is the mind something physical or not? Is my mind simply my brain? Or is it a product of
    my brain? Or is it something more than my physical brain?
  o Where does the mind fit into our scientific understanding of ourselves and our world?
  o What is the relationship between mind and behavior? How does mental causation work?
  o Do minds require brains? Or could there be many different sorts of minds? Artificial minds?
  o Is the mind like a sort of computer? Or is that a misleading metaphor?
  o What are the different sorts of mental states? What characterizes and/or constitutes them?
  o What are concepts? How are they formed? How are they stored? How are they accessed?
  o How do we explain consciousness? Is consciousness necessarily subjective?
  o What role does the body play in the composition of mind? What about the environment?
  o What can delusions and other pathological mental states teach us about the nature of mind?

Course Requirements:
The reading load in this course is fairly demanding. Students will be expected to keep up with the
required readings according to the schedule and attend all classes. Additionally, there are (optional)
supplemental readings that you may find helpful, and which in some cases may be necessary,
depending on the paper topics you select. We may often focus on short passages from the day’s
assigned text together, so please bring the text(s) under discussion with you to class each day (either
in print or electronic form) so that you can participate. Students are also expected to actively discuss
the material in weekly conferences, and there is a 10% grade for regular attendance and participation
in conferences, to be determined by your TA. There will be 2 papers on topics relevant to the
material, as well as a final take-home exam covering the breadth of the course.

Materials:
All readings for the course will be available through MyCourses.
Evaluation:
2 papers – 25% (1500-2000 words) and 30% (2000-2500 words)
Final exam (take-home) – 35%
Conference participation – 10%

McGill Policies:
In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

McGill University values academic integrity. All students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the code of student conduct and disciplinary procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/integrity for more information).

As the instructor of this course I endeavor to provide an inclusive learning environment. However, if you experience barriers to learning in this course, do not hesitate to discuss them with me and the Office for Students with Disabilities, 514-398-6009.

In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University’s control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.

Reading schedule: you will be expected to have read the following before the date indicated.

NOTE: Readings that are bulleted and marked “[supp]” are supplemental texts: they are recommended, in many cases helpful as background or further explanation, but they are not required reading and are left to your discretion. Depending on the paper topic(s) you select later on, some of those supplemental texts may be necessary for your paper.

Wed Sep 7  Dualism
Rene Descartes (1641) – Meditations, II, VI
Rene Descartes (1649) – The Passions of the Soul (Excerpts)

Fri Sep 9  Problems with Dualism
Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia (1643) – Correspondence with Descartes (excerpts)
Jen McWeeny (2011) – Princess Elisabeth and the Mind-Body Problem

Mon Sep 12  Mind/Brain Identity
J.J.C. Smart (1959) – Sensations and Brain Processes (excerpt)
U.T. Place (1954) – Is Consciousness a Brain Process?

Wed Sep 14  Behaviorism
Carl Hempel (1935) – The Logical Analysis of Psychology
  • [supp] John Watson (1913) – Psychology as the Behaviorist Views It
Mon Sep 19  Behaviorism
Hilary Putnam (1961) – *Brains and Behavior*
  • [supp] Daniel Dennett (1978) – *Skinner Skinned*

Wed Sep 21  Functionalism
David Lewis (1978) – *Mad Pain and Martian Pain*
  • [supp] David Lewis (1972) – *Psychophysical and Theoretical Identifications*

Mon Sep 26  Functionalism
Hilary Putnam (1967) – *The Nature of Mental States*
  • [supp] Ned Block & Jerry Fodor (1972) – *What Psychological States Are Not*

Wed Sep 28  Artificial Intelligence
Alan Turing (1950) – *Computing Machinery and Intelligence*

Mon Oct 3  Artificial Intelligence
John Searle (1980) – *Minds, Brains and Programs*
  • [supp] Margaret Boden (1987) – *Escaping the Chinese Room*

Wed Oct 5  Modularity of Mind
  • [supp] David Marr (1982) – *Vision* (Ch. 1)

**FIRST PAPER DUE IN CONFERENCE (Week of Oct 3-7)**

Wed Oct 12  (Massive) Modularity of Mind

Mon Oct 17  The Frame Problem
Jerry Fodor (1987) – *Modules, Frames, Fridgeons, Sleeping Dogs and the Music of the Spheres*
Daniel Dennett (1987) – *Cognitive Wheels* (Excerpt)
  • [supp] Peter Carruthers (2003) – *On Fodor’s Problem*

Wed Oct 19  Consciousness
Ned Block (1978) – *Troubles with Functionalism*
Susan Blackmore (2006) – *Conversation with Ned Block*

Mon Oct 24  Consciousness
Susan Blackmore (2003) – *Consciousness: An Introduction, Ch. 2, What Is It Like To Be...*
Thomas Nagel (1974) – *What Is It Like to Be a Bat* (excerpt)
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<td>Wed Oct 26</td>
<td>Consciousness</td>
<td>Frank Jackson (1982) – <em>Epiphenomenal Qualia</em></td>
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<td>• [supp] Frank Jackson (1986) – <em>What Mary Didn’t Know</em></td>
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<td>Patricia Churchland (1996) – <em>The Hornswoggle Problem</em></td>
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**SECOND PAPER DUE IN CONFERENCE (Week of Oct 31-Nov 4)**

| Mon Nov 7   | Eliminativism                | P. M. Churchland (1982) – *Eliminative Materialism and the Propositional Attitudes* |
|            |                              | • [supp] Susan Blackmore (2006) – *Conversation with Patricia and Paul Churchland* |
| Wed Nov 9  | Eliminativism                | Lynne Rudder-Baker (1987) – *Cognitive Suicide*                        |
| Mon Nov 14 | Alief                        | Tamar Gendler (2008) – *Alief in Action*                               |
|            |                              | • [supp] Eric Schwitzgebel (2010) – *Acting Contrary to Our Professed Beliefs* |
|            |                              | • [supp] Brie Gertler (2007) – *Overextending the Mind*                |
| Wed Nov 30 | Rationality and Delusion     | Lisa Bortolotti (2010) – *Delusions and Other Irrational Beliefs* (Excerpts) |
|            |                              | • [supp] Anne A.M. Davies & Martin Davies (2009) – *Explaining Pathologies of Belief* |
| Mon Dec 5  | Rationality and Delusion     | Elizabeth Pacherie (2010) – *Perceptions, Emotions and Delusions: The Case of the Capgras Delusion* |
Links: Useful background reading from the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, online.

- Dualism (H. Robinson)
- Behaviorism (G. Graham)
- Mind/Brain Identity Theory (J.J.C. Smart)
- Physicalism (D. Stoljar)
- Functionalism (J. Levin)
- Multiple Realizability (J. Bickle)
- Mental Causation (J. Heil & D. Robb)
- Computational Theory of Mind (M. Rescola)
- The Frame Problem (M. Shanahan)
- Mental Representation (D. Pitt)
- Modularity of Mind (P. Robbins)
- Consciousness (R. van Gulick)
- Qualia (M. Tye)
- Consciousness and Intentionality (C. Siewert)
- Phenomenal Intentionality (A. Mendelowici & D. Bourget)
- Eliminative Materialism (W. Ramsey)
- Embodied Cognition (L. Foglia & R. Wilson)
- Intentionality (P. Jacob)
- Cognitive Science (P. Thagard)