

## PHIL 306: Philosophy of Mind

Winter 2018

Mondays & Wednesdays 10:35-11:25, ARTS W-215

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In our everyday lives we make use of common sense ideas about the mind. For instance, you may have encountered people making claims like “the mind is like a computer” or wondered what it would be like to be someone else. The aim of this course is to critically revisit those questions and give a more rigorous answer to them. What is the nature of the mind? Is it really like a computer? And what do we mean when we say that there is something that it is like, for example, to see the colours of a sunset? The first half of the course will focus on classical debates about the nature of the mind, whether it’s physical or not, and the implications of this view for consciousness and the way we undergo conscious experiences. The second half of the course will be dedicated to a more precise understanding of the mental states that are routinely discussed in the debates about the nature of the mind. We will look at beliefs, at whether and how they differ from desires, and what goes on in our cognition when we sometimes believe something just because it makes us feel good. We will examine the role that intentions and actions play in the way we navigate the environment and specifically what happens when we intend to stick to a resolution, and yet, out of weakness, we fail to do so.

### Assignments:

Workload for this course involves

- 1) participation in conferences (10% of the final grade);
  - 2) a 4-page (maximum) first paper (20% of the final grade);
  - 3) a 6-page (maximum) term paper (30% of the final grade);
  - 4) a take-home exam (40% of the final grade)
- 1) **Conferences:** Attendance in conferences is mandatory. You will be expected to actively and regularly participate in the discussion. Conferences will begin **January 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup>** and you must sign up for one of them on Minerva.
  - 2) **First paper:** You will write a paper of no more than 4 pages, 12pt and double-spaced, where you are expected to reconstruct and explain the main argument of one of the papers discussed in the previous weeks and critically assess it. Instructions will be released on January 31<sup>st</sup> on MyCourses and the assignment must be submitted through MyCourses by 6pm on **February 12<sup>th</sup>**. You must include in your assignment your name, student number, and the name of your TA.  
**Note:** submissions for this course are electronic, thus it is your responsibility to ensure you have submitted your assignment properly.
  - 3) **Term paper:** You will write a paper of no more than 6 pages, 12pt and double-spaced, on an assigned topic. Instructions will be released on MyCourses on March 4th and the paper must be submitted through MyCourses by 6pm by **March 19<sup>th</sup>**. You must include in your assignment your name, student number, and the name of your TA.

- 4) **Take-home exam:** You will answer a set of short questions and write a paper on an assigned topic pertaining to the later part of the course. Instructions will be released approximately 3 weeks prior to the due date.

**Extensions:** Extensions to deadlines will be granted exclusively for medical reasons and must be appropriately documented with a medical note. Assignments submitted after the due date will be penalized at the rate of 1/3 per day (including weekends). For example, a paper that is evaluated as a B+, if one day late, will be assigned a B, and if three days late, it will be assigned a C+.

**Note: Requests for extensions must be directed to the TAs, not the instructor.**

**Texts:** All texts will be available on MyCourses.

**Electronics and Laptop Policy:** Students may use laptops for academic purposes only. Phones must be turned off during the lecture period.

**Note:** The recording of lectures is strictly forbidden.

**Prerequisites:** There are no prerequisites for this course but the material is difficult and some readings can be pretty dense.

**Academic integrity:** McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, 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/students/srr/honest/students/](http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/students/) for more information).

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

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.

According to Senate regulations, instructors are not permitted to make special arrangements for final exams. Please consult the Calendar, section 4.7.2.1, General University Information & Regulations at [www.mcgill.ca](http://www.mcgill.ca)

If you have a disability please contact the instructor to arrange a time to discuss your situation. It would be helpful if you contact the Office for Students with Disabilities at 514-398-6009 before you do this.

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### Schedule of readings

All readings will be made available on MyCourses.

	<b>DUALISM</b>	
Week 1	<b>January 8</b>	Introduction to the course, Descartes, <i>Meditations II and VI</i> (14 pages)
	<b>January 10</b>	Continuation, Correspondence between Descartes and Princess Elisabeth (5)
	<b>Suggested reading:</b>	Jen McWeeny "Princess Elisabeth and the Mind–Body Problem" (4)

## **BEHAVIORISM**

- Week 2     **January 15**     Gilbert Ryle, “Descartes’ Myth” (14)  
**January 17**     Hilary Putnam “Brains and Behavior” (17)

## **IDENTITY THEORY**

- Week 3     **January 22**     J.J.C. Smart “Sensations and Brain Processes” (17)  
**January 24**     Donald Davidson, “Mental Events” (16)

**Suggested reading:** Amir Horowitz “Davidson’s Argument for Anomalous Monism” (3)

## **FUNCTIONALISM**

- Week 4     **January 29**     Hilary Putnam, “The Nature of Mental States” (9)  
**January 31**     Ned Block, “Troubles with Functionalism (28)
- Week 5     **February 5**     John Searle, “Minds, Brains, and Programs” (8)

## **CONSCIOUSNESS**

- February 7**     Thomas Nagel, 'What Is It Like to Be a Bat?' (17)
- Week 6     **February 12**     Frank Jackson, “What Mary Didn't Know” (5) – **1<sup>st</sup> Assignment due**  
**February 14**     Gilbert Harman, “The Intrinsic Quality of Experience” (23)

## **AGAINST QUALIA**

- Week 7     **February 19**     Daniel Dennett, 'Quining Qualia' (24)

## **BELIEFS**

- February 21**     Recap of the first half of the course, introduction to beliefs
- Week 8     **February 26**     Bernard Williams, ‘Deciding to Believe’ (15)  
**February 28**     John Heil, “Believing Reasonably” (16)

**Reading week** – no class

- Week 9     **March 12**     John Heil, “Doxastic Incontinence” (15)  
**March 14**     Amelie Rorty, “Akratic Believers” (9)

Week 10      **March 19**      Martina Orlandi, Sarah Stroud, “Self-control in Action and Belief” (25) – **Term paper due**

**INTENTIONS**

**March 21**      Elisabeth Pacherie, Patrick Haggard “What are Intentions?” (24)

Week 11      **March 26**      Michael Bratman, “Taking Plans Seriously” (16)

**ACTIONS**

**March 28**      Elizabeth Anscombe, *Intention*, §§6-8, 17, 28-32, 45-48. (21)

Week 12      **April 2**      **Easter Monday**

**April 4**      Donald Davidson, “Intending” (10)

Week 13      **April 9**      Keith Donnellan “Knowing What I’m Doing” (6)

**April 11**      Alfred Mele, “Weakness of Will and Akrasia” (15) – **No conferences**

Week 14      **April 16**      TBD