PHIL470: Situated Cognition  
Winter 2016

Instructor  Karina Vold  
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Office Hours  Thursdays 2:00-3:00 pm, LEA 933  
Course Days & Time  Tuesdays & Thursdays 11:35-12:55pm  
Course Location  Birks 205

**Topic:** Situated cognition is an umbrella term for several related views about the mind that have emerged over the last several decades including embodied, embedded, extended and distributed views of the mind. In this course we will explore two of these views in depth as well as consider some of the major objections to each. To do this we will need to understand traditional ‘internalist’ views of cognition that these new theories run up against, as well as clarify some important terminology, such as what we mean when we speak of ‘mindedness’ and ‘mentality’. This will compose the first of four course sections. In the final three sections we will introduce externalist and situated views of cognition, and look at arguments for and against two of these theories: the embodied mind thesis and the extended mind thesis.

**Course objectives:**

1. For students to become familiar with the dominant internalist, externalist, and ‘situated’ views in the Philosophy of Mind and Cognition.

2. For students to be able to engage in reasoned, clear, philosophical discussions on the abstract issues we look at.

3. For students to develop the intellectual confidence and skills to necessary to analyze and critique positions on the issues covered, but also to adopt positions of their own and be able to defend their positions with sound logic.

4. For students to write a single well-developed argumentative paper that could be used as a writing sample for graduate schools applications and/or to submit to an undergraduate conference or journal.

**Grade breakdown:**

15% Class participation  
→ This includes attendance and involvement in class discussions.

20% Two sets of discussion questions on weekly readings (10% each)  
→ Due by the start of the week, on the Monday before class.
Each set should include two well thought out questions about the readings.
→ Choose any two weeks, but they must be in different sections of the course (excluding the first and final weeks).

20%  Final Paper Proposal and Outline
→ Due March 8th
→ On a single one-sided page
→ If you wish to write on a topic that comes after March 15th, you may instead submit a request for a proposal extension by March 15th. N.B. If you opt for an extension you must write on a topic that comes after March 15th or you will receive a hefty penalty.

45%  Final Paper (3500 word limit).
→ Due in the last class: April 14th

Topics and Reading Schedule:

Section One: Traditional view of cognition and important terminology

Week one: Introduction and Mind-Body problem

Jan 12th  Introduction: Overview of Course Content, Schedule, and Assignments
Reading  Course Syllabus

Jan 14th  The Mind-Body problem and Cartesian Dualism
Required  Descartes, Meditations on First Philosophy (II and VI). (In Chalmers 2002)

Week two: Views on the nature of the mental

Jan 19th  Behaviorism, Adverbialism, and the Cognitive Revolution
Suggested  Skinner, “Why I am not a Cognitive Psychologist”
            Chomsky, “Review of B.F. Skinner’s Verbal Behavior”

Jan 21st  Mind-Brain identity theory
Required  Smart, “Sensations and Brain Processes” (In Chalmers 2002)

Week three: More views on the nature of the mental

Jan 26th  Functionalism
Required  Putnam, “The Nature of Mental States” (In Chalmers 2002)
Suggested Lewis, “Psychophysical and Theoretical Identifications” (In Chalmers 2002)
SEP, “Functionalism” (Available online)

Jan 28th Problems for Functionalism
Required Block, “Troubles with Functionalism” (Excerpt) (In Chalmers 2002)
Searle, “Minds, brains and programs”

Week four: The Mark of the Mental

Feb 2nd Intentionality
Required Brentano, “The Distinction between Mental and Physical Phenomena” (Excerpt) (In Chalmers 2002)
Suggested SEP, “Intentionality” (2014) (Available online)

Feb 4th Consciousness
Required Nagel, “What is it like to be a bat?” (In Chalmers 2002)

Section Two: Introduction to Situated Cognition

Week five: Situated Views of Cognition

Feb 9th Introduction to Situated Cognition

Feb 11th 4E Views of Cognition
Required Rowlands, “The Mind Embodied, Embedded, Enacted, and Extended” (2011)

Section Three: The Embodied Mind Thesis

Week six: The Embodied Mind Thesis

Feb 16th Conceptions of Embodiment
Required Shapiro, “Conceptions of Embodiment” (2010)
Feb 18th  The Embodied Mind Thesis  
Required  Gallagher, How the Body Shapes the Mind.  
Chapter 6: Prenoeitic Constraints on Perception and Action  
Suggested  Chapter 5: The Body in Gesture

**Week seven: The Constitution Hypothesis**

Feb 23rd  The Constitution Hypothesis  

Feb 25th  Embodied Perception  
Required  Noë, Action in Perception.  
Chapter 1: The Enactive Approach to Perception: An Introduction

*** Reading Week: February 29th- March 4th ***

**Week eight: Objections to the Embodied Mind Thesis**

March 8th  Skeptical Objections: the Brain in a Vat  

March 10th  Objections to the Constitution Hypothesis  

**Section Four: Externalism and the Extended Mind Thesis**

**Week nine: Content Externalism**

March 15th  *** Final Paper Proposal & Outline (or extension request) due at start of class ***  
Natural Kind Externalism  
Suggested  SEP, “Externalism About Mental Content” (Available online)

March 17th  Social Externalism  

**Week ten: Active (or Vehicle) Externalism**
March 22nd  The Extended Mind Thesis

March 24th  The Extended Mind Thesis a decade later
          Clark, Supersizing the Mind (2008) (Excerpts)

Week eleven: Objections to the Extended Mind

March 29th  The Coupling- Constitution Fallacy
          Adams and Aizawa, “Why the Mind is Still in the Head” (2009)

March 31st  The Mark of the Cognitive
          Rowlands “The Mark of the Cognitive” (2011)

Week twelve: The Socially Extended Mind

April 5th  Social Cognitive Extension
Required  Gallagher, “The Socially Extended Mind.”

April 7th  Objections to Social Cognitive Extension
Suggested  Jacob, “Embodying the Mind by Extending It” (2011)

Week thirteen: Course Summary & Review

April 12th  Review  Course Summary: From Internalism to Externalism
April 14th  Review  *** Term papers due at the start of class ***
          Final discussion

Course materials:

Course Texts:

1. Chalmers, D. “Philosophy of Mind Classical and Contemporary Readings” (Oxford,

**Other Readings**: Available online (through McGill Library and/or on myCourses).

N.B. Instructor generated course materials (e.g., lecture slides, handouts, notes, summaries, exam questions, etc.) are protected by law and may not be copied or distributed in any form or in any medium without explicit permission of the instructor. Permission will not be granted. Note that infringements of copyright can be subject to follow up by the University under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures.

**Reading List:**


Gertler, B. “Overextending the Mind” In *Arguing about the Mind*. Brie Gertler and Lawrence Shapiro, eds. (Routledge, 2007).


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1. 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/](http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/) for more information). (approved by Senate on 29 January 2003)

L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l’honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site [www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/](http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/)).

2. 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. (approved by Senate on 21 January 2009)

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3. 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.

4. End-of-course [evaluations](#) are one of the ways that McGill works towards maintaining and improving the quality of courses and the student’s learning experience. You will be notified by e-mail when the evaluations are available on Mercury, the online course evaluation system. Please note that a minimum number of responses must be received for results to be available to students.

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

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8. **THE RECORDING OF LECTURES IS STRICTLY FORBIDDEN and is ILLEGAL** without the consent of the instructor. Consent will not be given. Violators will be prosecuted.