

Johns Hopkins University - Center for Talented Youth

PHILOSOPHY OF MIND

Instructor: Sahar Joakim

Syllabus

About the Teaching Style:

Care is essential in teaching and learning. No one can learn something without first thinking about it; and, no one concerns their mind with matters about which they do not care. I aim, therefore, to inspire my students to care for their thoughts and to care for the thoughts of others (by “others,” I mean both historical figures as well as their fellow classmates). My teaching philosophy therefore revolves around the notion of care, and manifests *high professional and academic standards mixed in with a healthy sense of play*.

About the Course:

This course is designed to get students to engage philosophically in fundamental questions surrounding the mind, brain, and consciousness; as we are embodied, the intersection of mind and body is essential. Students will be examining issues in the philosophy of mind, including the mind-body problem, skepticism, self-knowledge, the reliability of introspection, behaviorism, self-reports of mental states, personal identity, free will, and the nature of consciousness. As students attempt to shed light on the nature of mind, they critique primary philosophical works, participate in discussions and debates, and write analytical essays.

Here is a list of questions we may explore: What is the nature of mind? How is the mind related to the brain? What is consciousness? Can we be certain that others have minds and conscious experiences? Is artificial intelligence possible? What am I essentially? Do I have authority over what I think or do others? Is my mind in control of my body? What is a thinking thing? Do animals have the same mind as we do? How do we know we are real objects and not simply imagining events like in dreams? What is the difference between wake state and dream state? What is it to feel pain? Can someone else feel our pain?

Student Learning Outcomes

(1) Achieve a basic understanding of some of the philosophical texts most foundational to the Western intellectual tradition within the philosophy of mind literature.

(2) Be able to think independently and creatively about some of the perennial questions in philosophy of mind.

(3) Be able to understand and evaluate arguments offered (either in speech or in writing) for the philosophical positions of others.

(4) Be able to develop and evaluate clear and precise arguments (either in speech or in writing) for their own philosophical positions.

(5) Achieve a greater awareness of the nature and importance of intellectual virtues, such as honesty and integrity, respect for others (especially those with opposing views), objectivity, and openness.

(6) Be able to discuss controversial topics in detail while remaining calm and collected.

Student Success Center Syllabus Statement:

In recognition that people learn in a variety of ways and that learning is influenced by multiple factors (e.g., prior experience, study skills, learning disability), resources to support student success are available. Please contact me if you are concerned with your success in this course.

Course Schedule:

We will be moving at whatever pace comes natural to the class. Below, see the order in which we will investigate our course topics.

Day One: Introduction

Establish class rules and expectations, materials to bring to class, meeting one another in a professional setting, reviewing the syllabus, introduction to philosophy in general and a summary of subfields, greater introduction to literature in philosophy of mind.

The nature of self and consciousness

SEP on Personal Identity

What kind of thing are you?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2CLun4FpqR8>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2CLun4FpqR8>

Psychological versus physical continuity

Person Identity #19

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=trqDnLNRuSc>

Person Identity #20

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=17WiQ_tNld4

Thomas Metzinger: "The No-Self Alternative"

Consciousness

Thomas Nagel What is it like to be a bat?"

Qualia

<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/qualia-knowledge/>

THE MARY ARGUMENT (Frank Jackson)

Mind and Technology

Searle: The Chinese Room: "Can Computers Think?" (against physicalism)

The influence of technology on the human mind

<http://it.pedf.cuni.cz/~bobr/hmind/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oc7ZYj4CCdM>

Cole, 1991, 'Artificial Intelligence and Personal Identity', *Synthese*, 88: 399–417.

Is your phone a part of your mind?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ksasPjrYFTg>

Physicalism

Searle 2010, 'Why Dualism (and Materialism) Fail to Account for Consciousness' in Lee, Richard E. (ed) *Questioning Nineteenth Century Assumptions about Knowledge, III: Dualism*. NY: SUNY Press.

Turing, A., 1948, 'Intelligent Machinery: A Report', London: National Physical Laboratory.

Chalmers: The Zombie Argument against Physicalism

The Conscious Mind: In Search of a Fundamental Theory pgs. 123-131

Questioning Reality

Plato's *Theaetetus* (page 175-6) 157e-159

Plato's Dream Argument, How do we know what is "real"?

Descartes' *Meditations I*

Descartes' Dream Argument, What do I know for certain?

Descartes, *Meditations II*

Evil Demon Argument, Who is in charge of my thoughts?

Grasping Reality

Byrne, Alex (2011). Knowing that I am thinking. In Anthony E. Hatzimoysis (ed.), *Self-Knowledge*. Oxford University Press.

Plato's *Charmides* 164a- 169d (end)

Temperance as Self-Knowledge

McGinn, Colin (2005). „Dream Belief” Chapter 7. of *Mindsight: Image, Dream, Meaning*. Harvard University Press. pp. 96-122

Vendler, Zeno (1972). "On What One Knows" chapter V, sections 1-3 and 8-9 in *Res Cogitans: An Essay in Rational Psychology*. Ithaca [N.Y.] Cornell University Press. pp. 89-93 and 112-119

Extended Mind

Clark, Andy & Chalmers, David J. (1998). The extended mind. *Analysis* 58 (1):7-19.

Gertler, Brie (2007). Overextending the mind? In Brie Gertler & Lawrence Shapiro (eds.), *Arguing About the Mind*. Routledge. pp. 192–206.

SOFT WARE AND HARD WARE

Belief, Action, Free Will

Schwitzgebel, Eric (2010). Acting contrary to our professed beliefs or the gulf between occurrent judgment and dispositional belief. *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 91 (4):531-553.

Thomas Nagel's Moral Luck

What determines, if anything, our actions?

Benjamin Libet's neuroscience experiments: NO FREE WILL

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/out-the-darkness/201709/benjamin-libet-and-the-denial-free-will>

Determinism vs indeterminism and ethical consequences (legally and morally)

I reserve the right to modify this syllabus or any of its provisions at any time.
Students will be notified in writing of any such changes.