

PHILOSOPHY OF MIND

Instructor: Ignacio Ojea Quintana (ignacio.ojea@anu.edu.au).

Meeting Time:

Office Hours:

Course Description

This is an introductory course on the Philosophy of Mind that will cover central questions about the nature of the mental.

More particularly, the first part of the course will focus on the metaphysics of the mental: are mental states identical to physical states? or are they states of a totally different substance? If so, how does this substance interact with the body? Does this distinction rest on a mistake that we can correct by examining how we apply mental terms? Are we confused when we talk about the metaphysics of mind? Are mental states functional states?

The second part of the course will focus on consciousness, since some views argue that it is what makes the mind distinctive. This section will cover several views on the nature of consciousness, along with issues concerning the subjectivity, or “qualitative character” of experience, and the connection between consciousness and the brain. Is there an irreducibly subjective element to experience? How hard is the problem of consciousness? Do we even know what a theory of consciousness would look like?

The final part will be exploratory and make connections with other subjects. Among other issues, we will examine the relation between computation, the mind, and artificial intelligence.

Required Texts

- Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy* (ISBN 0872201929).
- David Armstrong, *The Mind-Body Problem: An Opinionated Introduction* (ISBN 9780813390574).

The rest of the material will be available online.

Both of the required texts can be found on Amazon. No particular translation of the *Meditations* is required, and digital versions of the material are also accepted.

COURSE POLICIES

Grading

20% — First Quizz.

20% — First Paper.

10% — Attendance and Class Participation.

25% — Final take home Quiz.

25% — Final Quiz.

All quizzes must be completed to pass the course.

Students are required to read the texts *before* the class for which they are assigned, attend class, bring the readings with them to class, and participate actively in the class discussions. Your degree of participation will be taken into account in the final grade (10%). It is expected that you read carefully and thoughtfully all of the assigned readings prior to class, and are able to ask questions and express your views on them.

You will be required to write two papers during the term. The mid-term will be 1400-1600 words, while the final paper will be 2800-3200 words. Several suggested topics will be sent out 7 days before the mid-term paper is due, and 10 days before the final paper is due, and we will discuss each of the assignments in more detail when I hand out the suggested topics. You are also encouraged to develop your own paper topic but you must consult me in this case. In each of these papers, you will be expected to introduce and defend a claim. It might be your own solution regarding a certain philosophical problem we have encountered, or a critical examination and evaluation of one of the arguments defended by one of the authors, or a specific interpretation of a crucial and problematic passage. You are required to demonstrate a thorough understanding of the relevant portions of various texts from the course and draw upon them in order to construct an argument in favor of your position.

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

Please note that all readings and due dates are subject to change.

Week 1: Introduction and Dualism

Introduction

Descartes, Meditations 1 & 2.

Armstrong Ch 2.

Optional: "Dualism" in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

Week 2: Behaviorism

Armstrong Ch 5.

Gilbert Ryle, excerpt from "The Concept of Mind".

Jerry Fodor, excerpt 1 from *The Language of Thought*.

Optional: Hilary Putnam, "Brains and Behaviour."

Optional: Daniel Dennett, "True Believers: The Intentional Strategy and Why it Works".

Week 3: Identity Theory

Armstrong Ch 6.

J.J.C. Smart, "Sensations and Brain Processes".

Optional: J.J.C. Smart, "The Mind/Brain Identity Theory", *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

Optional: U.T. Place, "Is Consciousness a Brain Process?".

Week 4: Functionalism

Armstrong Ch 7.

Hilary Putnam, "The Nature of Mental States".

Optional: Janet Levin, "Functionalism", *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

Optional: Kim Sterelny, Chapter 1 of *The Representational Theory of Mind: An Introduction*.

Optional: Ned Block and Jerry Fodor, "What Psychological States are Not".

Optional: Ned Block, "Troubles with functionalism".

Week 5: Non-Reductive Physicalism and Cognitivism

Armstrong Ch 9.

Jerry Fodor, excerpt 2 from *The Language of Thought*.

Herbert Simon, "What is an 'Explanation' of Behavior?".

First Paper Due.

Optional: Steven Pinker, “Rules of Language”.

Week 6: Consciousness

Thomas Nagel, “What is It Like to Be a Bat?”.

Frank Jackson, “Epiphenomenal Qualia”.

David Chalmers, “Facing up the problem of consciousness.”

First Take Home Quiz Due.

Week 7: Physicalist Response

Armstrong Ch 10.

Armstrong Ch 11.

Week 8: Consciousness, the Brain, and Neuropsychology

Thomas Nagel, “Brain Bisection and the Unity of Consciousness”.

Ramachandran “The Unbearable Likeness of Being”

Optional: R.L. Savoy, excerpts from “History and Future Directions...”.

Week 9: Computationalism

Alan Turing, “Computing Machinery and Intelligence”.

John Searle, “Can Computers Think?”.

Optional: John von Neumann, excerpts from *The Computer and the Brain*.

Week 10: Representation

Jesse Prinz, “Furnishing the Mind”.

Jerry Fodor, “Propositional Attitudes”.

Patricia Smith Churchland, excerpts from *Brain-Wise* Chapter 7.

Optional: Tim Crane, “Intentionality as the Mark of the Mental” (Online)

Week 11: Mind and Artificial Intelligence

Lecture on Neural Networks and functional approximation.

Richard Sutton and Andrew Barto, Chapter 15 of *Reinforcement Learning, An Introduction*.

Week 12: The Extended Mind and Review

Andy Clark and David Chalmers, “The Extended Mind”.

Derek Parfit, “Reductionism and Personal Identity”.

Review Session

Examination Week:

Final Quiz Due June 1st.

Final Paper Due June 1st.