
Philosophy 344: Philosophy of Mind - Summer 2023 (8 Week)

Instructor

Matthew Watts

MXW685@miami.edu

Office Hours: weekly through Zoom (Wednesdays at 11)

Class Meetings: Asynchronous Online

Course Description

What is a mind? How does it relate to a person's brain? How does it relate to their body and the external world? Can a mind exist in a very different kind of body (e.g., a computer or a robot)? Does thinking require a language-like code? If so, can nonlinguistic species think? What is it to have a mental image or to experience pain? Questions such as these have been the focus of philosophical thinking about "mind" for hundreds of years. But they have taken on new urgency with the development of sciences such as psychology, cognitive science, and cognitive neuroscience, each of which has brought sophisticated research methodologies to the task of understanding how the mind works.

Studying the mind is of both theoretical and practical value. The nature of the human mind and its relationship to the rest of the universe is something that has fascinated us as a species for centuries. In the last few decades advances in cognitive science have led to revolutionary findings in consciousness, brain functioning, perception, emotion, and free will (among others). This course will present a lively and engaging introduction to contemporary research in these areas and a tour through the core issues in philosophy of mind, which will help demystify often perplexing psychological phenomena leading to a heightened understanding of ourselves and those around us.

We all have minds, but we probably don't think about them very much. And that's okay – minds are primarily for thinking with, not thinking about. And just like most things in life like our cars, home plumbing, and teeth, we don't tend to think much about our mind until something goes wrong. If you suddenly find yourself suffering from some psychological problem then you might begin to think about what exactly your mind is and how it works.

Inclusivity and Academic Resources

Integration Statement: Any student who because of accessibility needs may require some special arrangements in order to meet course requirements should contact us as well as Disabilities Services in the Academic Development Center, N201, Whitten University Center as soon as they can.

Office of Academic Enhancement: You should familiarize yourself with the academic resources available to you as University of Miami students. The Office of Academic Enhancement provides a link with various resources available to you:
<https://www.oae.miami.edu/index.html> Utilize this!

Assignments & Discussion Board

Discussion Board Thread Activities (4% each discussion board for a total of 52%)

There are a total of 13 discussion board thread activities and all must be completed. Further instructions for each discussion thread can be found on Blackboard.

Term Paper Part 1: Mind/Body Problem (12%)

Throughout this course we will build an argumentative paper in stages, beginning with expository sections and working up to a final section where you argue for a thesis of your own. The topic of the paper is the Mind/Body Problem, and the eventual goal of the paper is to argue in support of the philosophical theory of the mind that you think best solves it. For the first expository section of this paper, write a 500-700 word draft explaining what the Mind/Body Problem is, using an example from popular media to illustrate the issue. The choice of examples is entirely up to you: it can be a film, a television series, a book, etc. -- anything that you think will help your reader understand and appreciate the Mind/Body Problem. In addition to the material on the Mind/Body Problem provided in class, there are sections in these articles from the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy and the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy that you might find helpful. Of course, in the draft you should explain the Mind/Body Problem entirely in your own words.

Term Paper Part 2: Comparing Theories (12%)

This is the second expository section of the term paper for the course. In the first section you explained the Mind/Body Problem in your own words. The purpose of this section is to introduce the reader to two philosophical theories of mind that attempt to solve the Mind/Body Problem. The two theories you choose to discuss can be any of the ones we've considered in class:

1. Substance Dualism
2. Property Dualism
3. Behaviorism
4. Mind/Brain Identity Theory
5. Functionalism

In a 500-700 word draft, explain to the reader what each of these theories says about the mind, and how it solves the Mind/Body Problem. Make sure to use the example you chose for Part I (film, book, etc.) in your discussion. Present each of the two theories as plausibly as you can, by explaining to the reader at least one consideration that could persuade someone to adopt it. At this point you do not have to endorse one of these theories over the other as the best solution to the Mind/Body Problem. That will be the job of the final section of the paper, due in Module 7.

Term Paper Part 3: Original Argument (12%)

We have now reached the stage of the term paper at which you present your own philosophical point of view, by writing a 500-700 word draft evaluating the two theories you introduced in Part II. Explain what you think are the relative strengths and weaknesses of each view, and argue why one theory is able to overcome objections or explain mental phenomena in a more plausible, systematic, or desirable way than the other. The goal is to produce a paper that clearly identifies the theory you have chosen as the best solution to the Mind/Body Problem, and offers reasons in support of that conclusion. As part of your support for your thesis, make sure to consider how someone who disagrees with you might object, and explain how you would respond. This time you will submit a complete essay, with all three sections:

exposition of the mind/body problem (Part I), comparing and contrasting two theories (Part II), and the new argumentative section coming down in favor of one theory over the other. Make sure to include an introduction and a conclusion, too. I will provide comments and you will have an opportunity to revise your paper one last time before turning in the final version.

Term Paper Part 4: Final Submission (12%)

Upload the final draft of the term paper, with all sections included and all suggested revisions made.

Grading Policies

Submitting Written Work: All written work should be submitted by the due date via Blackboard.

Late Work: Late work will be accepted *without* penalty.

Cheating/Plagiarism/Collusion: The University of Miami Honor Code defines cheating, plagiarism and collusion. Cheating, plagiarism and collusion are serious academic offenses. Any case that will be discovered will result in failing the class, and it will be reported.

Course Readings

All readings and requisite material will be available through Blackboard and the University of Miami Library website.

Course Schedule

Readings	Assignment	Due Date
Module 1: Meet Your Mind		
Thagard (2009) 'Why cognitive science needs philosophy and vice versa' (Online)	Online Orientation (optional) Discussion Board Thread Activity: Emotions	May 15th
Pete Mandik, Chapter 1, 'This is Philosophy of Mind'	Discussion Board Thread Activity: The Technology of Artificial Intelligence	
21 Emotions with No English Word Equivalents (Online)	Discussion Board Thread Activity: Do You Have Free Will?	
The Rapid Advance of Artificial Intelligence (Online)		
Module 2: Dualism		
Jaegwon Kim, Chapter 2, 'Mind	Discussion Thread Activity:	

<i>as Immaterial Substance'</i> Descartes, <i>'Meditations on First Philosophy (II and VI)'</i> Smullyan, <i>'An Unfortunate Dualist'</i>	Find the Gap Discussion Thread Activity: Substance Dualism	
	Term Paper - Part 1: Mind/Body Problem	
Module 3: Behaviorism and the Problem of Other Minds		
Jaegwon Kim, Chapter 3, <i>'Mind and Behavior'</i> Ryle, <i>'Descartes' Myth'</i> Putnam, <i>'Brains and Behavior'</i>	Discussion Board Thread Activity: Category Mistakes	May 24th
	Discussion Board Thread Activity: Mental States as Dispositions to Behave	
Module 4: Identity Theory		
Jaegwon Kim, Chapter 4, <i>'Mind as the Brain: The Psychoneural Identity Theory'</i> J. J. C. Smart, <i>'Sensations and Brain Processes'</i> Feigl, <i>'The "mental" and the "physical"'</i>	Discussion Board Thread Activity: Brain and Facial Recognition	May 26th
	Discussion Board Thread Activity: Psychological Conditions	
Module 5: Functionalism		
Jaegwon Kim, Chapter 5 <i>'Mind as a Computing Machine'</i> & 6 <i>'Mind as a Causal System'</i> John R. Searle, <i>'Can Computers Think?'</i> Ned Block, <i>'Troubles with Functionalism'</i>	Discussion Thread Activity: Neural Plasticity	May 31st
	Term Paper - Part 2: Comparing Theories	
Module 6: Consciousness		
Jaegwon Kim, Chapter 9 <i>'What Is Consciousness?'</i> & 10 <i>'Consciousness and the Mind-Body Problem'</i>	Discussion Thread Activity: Cartesian Dualism and Interactionism	June 2nd

Mandik, Peter, <i>'The neurophilosophy of consciousness.'</i>		
Block, N, <i>'Two neural correlates of consciousness'</i>		
Module 7: Extended, Embedded, and Embodied Cognition		
Andy Clark and David J. Chalmers, <i>'The Extended Mind'</i>	Discussion Thread Activity: Self-Consciousness and Science	June 7th
Sterelny, Kim. <i>'Minds: Extended or Scaffolded?'</i>	Term Paper, Part 3: Original Argument	
Sutton, John, Celia Harris et al., <i>'The psychology of memory, extended cognition, and socially distributed remembering'</i>		
Palermos, S. Orestis, <i>'The Dynamics of Group Cognition'</i>		
Bach-y-Rita & Kercel: <i>'Sensory Substitution and the Human-Machine Interface'</i>		
Module 8: Identity		
Daniel Dennett, <i>'Where Am I?'</i>	Discussion Thread Activity: Identity and the Ship of Theseus	June 9th
Daniel Dennett, <i>'The Self as Centre of Narrative Gravity'</i>		
Dan McAdams <i>"'First we invented stories, then they changed us": The Evolution of Narrative Identity'</i>		
	Term Paper, Part 4: Final Submission	June 14th