

Meetings: Tuesday and Thursday 2:00 PM - 3:20 PM, 105 HL*

Instructor: Prof. Robert Van Gulick. RNVANGUL@syr.edu

Office Hours: Wed 1:00 PM - 2:30 PM and by appointment – *Online Zoom*.

* Course is currently scheduled to be 100% in-person. Depending on covid situation that may change for some parts of the semester.

Course Topic: Understanding Consciousness. We will investigate the *nature and basis of consciousness*. What is consciousness? How does it relate to non-conscious aspects of reality such as the *physical* and the *neural*? Many readings will be drawn from philosophy but also from neuroscience and psychology. The final part of the course will focus on what we can learn about consciousness by considering *non-human animals and their minds*.

Readings & Course Texts.

• **3 books for purchase** – all available online on Amazon – new or used.

1. Stanislaus Dehaene. *Consciousness and the Brain: Deciphering How the Brain Codes our Thoughts*. (Viking/Penguin, 2014, available in paperback).
2. Peter Godfrey-Smith. *Other Minds: The Octopus, the Sea, and the Deep Origins of Consciousness* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2017, available in paperback).
3. Michael Tye. *Tense Bees & Shell-Shocked Crabs. Are Animals Conscious?* (Oxford 2016).

• **Other readings** will all be posted on **Blackboard**.

• There will be some **videos to watch out of class**, some may have small rental cost.

Course Requirements - All parts of the course must be satisfactorily completed to receive credit for the course including class attendance & participation.

1. **READING** the assigned readings (*before* the class at which they are to be discussed) and **Submitting a Question** on each reading before class.
2. Regular **Class ATTENDANCE*** and **active PARTICIPATION** in class discussions.
3. A **MIDTERM EXAM**: *Take-home exam*. Distributed Tues 3/8, Due Thurs 3/24.
4. A **FINAL EXAM**: in-class **Fri, May 06, 12:45pm-2:45pm**
(**OR** depending on covid **may be changed to take-home exam.**)
5. A **PAPER** (5-7 pages) on one of a variety of topics that will be distributed during the second half of the course. Process will include **student exchange and peer commentary**.
6. A few **SHORT WRITINGS** (1-page or less) will be assigned.
7. **THINKING** **Consciously** about the issues and questions both in class and out of class
(Very important - this class is about consciousness and *requires active thinking!*)

Basis of course grade (all components including attendance must be completed).

Midterm exam = 25% Final exam = 25% Paper = 25%

Participation, short assignments (reading questions) & peer commentary = 25%

* **Attendance policy** - a maximum of 3 unexcused absences is allowed. (Please notify me promptly of any illness or other excusing circumstances). More than 3 unexcused absences will lower your participation score. 6 or more unexcused absences will count as not completing the participation component of the course, and thus in a course F.

Part I (up to midterm exam). Philosophical Problems of Consciousness

• Week of 1/25 & 1/27 Introduction – Consciousness.

Tues 1/25: First class, overview of the course.

Thurs 1/27: R. Van Gulick “*Consciousness Reconsidered* Reconsidered” (Blackboard)

• Week of 2/1 & 2/3 Consciousness - many questions + Mind-body issue.

Tues 2/1: “Consciousness”, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Sections 1-5.

<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/consciousness>

Thurs 2/3: “Consciousness”, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Sections 6-10.

+ Watch: “Octopus Making Contact”. PBS Nature, Season 38, Episode 1.

<https://www.pbs.org/video/octopus-making-contact-y8dyan/>

• Week of 2/8 & 2/10 – “What is it like to be...?” Subjectivity and Gaps.

Tues 2/8: Thomas Nagel, “What is it like to be a bat?” (Blackboard)

Thurs 2/10: Joseph Levine, “On leaving out what it is like”. (Blackboard)

◇ optional: Colin McGinn, “Can we solve the mind-body problem?” (Blackboard)

• Week of 2/15 & 2/17 Qualia and the Knowledge Argument.

Tues 2/15: Frank Jackson, “What Mary did not know”. (Blackboard)

R. Van Gulick, “Understanding the phenomenal mind: are we all just armadillos?” (Blackboard)

Thurs 2/27: Paul Churchland, “Knowing Qualia: a reply to Jackson” (Blackboard)

David Lewis, “What Experience Teaches” (Blackboard)

• Week of 2/22 & 2/24 Challenging Qualia – an eliminativist view.

Tues 2/22: Daniel Dennett, “Quining qualia” (Blackboard)

Thurs 2/24: more on Dennett + TBA (Blackboard)

• Week of 3/1 & 3/3 Panpsychism – a radical option?

Tues 3/1: Galen Strawson, “An argument for Panpsychism” (Blackboard)

Thurs 3/3: TBA – Selected replies to Strawson. (Blackboard)

Part II. A scientific theory of consciousness – the Global Neuronal Workspace GNWS.

• Week of 3/8 & 3/10 Consciousness and the Brain.

Tues 3/8: Stanislas Dehaene, *Consciousness and the Brain*, Introduction & Chapter 1: “Consciousness enters the lab”.



***Take-home exam distributed Tues 3/8. Due Thurs March 24.**

Thurs 3/10: *Consciousness and the Brain*, Chapter 2: “Fathoming unconscious depths”

----- MIDTERM - SPRING BREAK -----

• Week of 3/22 & 3/24 Consciousness and the Brain (continued)

Tues 3/22: *Consciousness and the Brain*, Chapter 3: “What is consciousness good for?”

Thurs 3/24: *Consciousness and the Brain*, Chapter 4: “The signatures of consciousness”.

• **Week of 3/29 & 3/31 Consciousness and the Brain (continued)**

Tues 3/29: *Consciousness and the Brain*, Chapter 5: “Theorizing consciousness”.

Thurs 3/31: *Consciousness and the Brain*, Chapter 6: “The ultimate test”.

• **Tuesday 4/5 Consciousness and the Brain (end)**

Tues 4/5: *Consciousness and the Brain*, Chapter 7: “The future of consciousness”.

Part III. Animal (non-human) Consciousness.

• **Thurs 4/7:** Rocco Gennaro, “Animal Consciousness.” (Blackboard)

Peter Godfrey-Smith *Other Minds: The Octopus, the Sea & the Deep Origins of Consciousness*, Chapters 1 & 2.

• **Week of 4/12 and 4/14. Octopus minds and Consciousness**

**Watch Video/Movie: “My Octopus Teacher”* (Oscar for Best Documentary Feature 2020)
Available on Netflix – will find option for those without access.

Tues 4/12 Peter Godfrey-Smith, *Other Minds: the Octopus,---*. Chapters 3,4 & 5.

Thurs 4/14 Peter Godfrey-Smith *Other Minds: the Octopus,---*. Chapters 6, 7, & 8.

• **Week of 4/19 and 4/21 Are Animals Conscious?**

Tues 4/19: Michael Tye, *Tense Bees & Shell-shocked Crabs. Are Animals Conscious?*
Chapters 1, 2 & 3.

Thurs 4/21: Michael Tye, *Tense Bees & Shell-shocked Crabs. Are Animals Conscious?*
Chapters 4,5 & 6.

Week of 4/26 and 4/28 Are Animals Conscious? (continued).

Tues 4/26: Michael Tye, *Tense Bees & Shell-shocked Crabs. Are Animals Conscious?*
Chapters 7, 8 & 9.

Thurs 4/28: Michael Tye, *Tense Bees & Shell-shocked Crabs. Are Animals Conscious?*
Chapters 10 & 11

Week of May 3 and May 5 - Final Connections and Questions.

Tues, May 3: GNWS and a skeptical view of Animal consciousness.

Peter Carruthers, “Animal Consciousness – No fact of the matter” (Blackboard)

Thurs, May 5: “Consciousness and Moral Standing”.

Peter Carruthers, “Does consciousness matter?” (Blackboard)

+ David Chalmers: TBA. (Blackboard)

Disability Statement

Syracuse University values diversity and inclusion; we are committed to a climate of mutual respect and full participation. There may be aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in barriers to your inclusion and full participation in this course. I invite any student to meet with me to discuss strategies and/or accommodations (academic adjustments) that may be essential to your success and to collaborate with the Office of Disability Services (ODS) in this process.

If you would like to discuss disability-accommodations or register with ODS, please visit [Office of Disability Services](#). Please call (315) 443-4498 or email disabilityservices@syr.edu for more detailed information. ODS is responsible for coordinating disability-related academic accommodations and will work with the student to develop an access plan. Since academic accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact ODS as soon as possible to begin this process.

Academic Integrity. *Syracuse University's Academic Integrity Policy reflects the high value that we, as a university community, place on honesty in academic work. The policy defines our expectations for academic honesty and holds students accountable for the integrity of all work they submit. Students should understand that it is their responsibility to learn about course-specific expectations, as well as about university-wide academic integrity expectations. The policy governs appropriate citation and use of sources, the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments, and the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verification of participation in class activities. The policy also prohibits students from submitting the same work in more than one class without receiving written authorization in advance from both instructors. Under the policy, students found in violation are subject to grade sanctions determined by the course instructor and non-grade sanctions determined by the School or College where the course is offered as described in the Violation and Sanction Classification Rubric. Syracuse University students are required to read an online summary of the University's academic integrity expectations and provide an electronic signature agreeing to abide by them twice a year during pre-term check-in on MySlice.*

Academic Integrity in PHI 400

Academic integrity is taken seriously in PHI 400, and any suspected violations will be thoroughly investigated and sanctions imposed if a violation is determined to have occurred. **Intentional violations will typically result in a grade of "Disciplinary F" for the course.** Students will be given full opportunity to respond to any charges and retain the right to appeal any decision or sanction to the A&S College Committee on Student Standards. In all cases in which a violation is determined to have occurred a report will be sent to the Office of Academic Integrity for its information in **accord** with University policy (even when the matter has been dealt with internal to the course.)

