

The Rise of Consciousness



PH 375 : Senior Seminar – The Rise of Consciousness

In the seventeenth century, “consciousness” began to take on a uniquely modern sense. This transition was sparked by new theories of mind and ideas, and it connected with other important issues of debate during the seventeenth century, including debates over the transparency of the mental, animal consciousness, and innate ideas. Additionally, consciousness was tied closely to moral identity, with both French and Latin lacking even a linguistic distinction between consciousness and conscience (i.e., a moral sensibility). This semantic shift marked a philosophical division between the psychological or phenomenal aspects of thought and a moral sensibility as well. The discussions on all of these topics were rich and varied in the seventeenth century—this seminar will focus on the basis of this shift and explore its impact on modern theories of mind.

As a **senior seminar**, this course will be driven by student involvement. This seminar will give you an opportunity to draw on the philosophical skills you have developed over the course of the major, and it will challenge you to work at your highest level. While this **topic** might be unfamiliar to you, your development of a philosophical mind will allow us quickly to engage the topic and interact with it at a deep level.

Information about the Professor

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Office Hours : Thursday 3-5 p.m. and by appt.

Requirements for the Course

- > Attendance
- > Participation and Discussion Questions (10%)
- > Three Short Essays (5% each = 15%)
- > Six 3P Reports (2.5% each = 15%)
- > Presentation (20%)
- > Research Paper (40%)

Attendance

Please arrive to class on time and remain in class for the full class period. I will expect you to attend every class unless you are ill, attending to a family emergency, or fulfilling a religious obligation. Unexcused absences will result in a grade reduction for the course, and an excess of 5 absences (even if some are excused) will result in failure of the course.

Since our seminar is hosting Prof. Simmons on April 5, attendance at her talk scheduled for the evening of April 5 is also required.

Participation

At this point in your college career, I don't need to remind you of what constitutes engaged participation. I have included a reading on Blackboard on how to enter into a classroom conversation if you want some suggestions for improving this part of your work. What I do wish to emphasize, however, is that participation should be at the highest level—I expect that you will come to class having read the texts for that day carefully, prepared notes and questions on the texts, and formulated preliminary views on the issues presented in the text. While I may direct our discussion at certain points, I fully expect that the discussions will be largely student-directed.

Discussion Questions

Coming up with good questions is an important philosophical skill. I will ask you to prepare **one good discussion question** for each non-presentation day. These questions should not be primarily factual. Rather, these questions should focus on analyzing and evaluating arguments in the readings and synthesizing the readings with other things we have read or discussed.

Bring your question with you to class. I will collect them at the end of each class period. At the beginning of each class I will randomly select one or two people to get our discussion started with their question.

I will grade the discussion questions on the following scale :

✓+	The question is probing and goes beyond a surface-level treatment of the readings. An excellent question is focused and pursues an argument more deeply than is treated in the readings, synthesizes the readings with previous readings, and/or raises an objection or counterexample that will clarify or extend the discussion of the argument.
✓	The question demonstrates good comprehension and understanding of the readings. These questions do many of the things that the excellent questions do, but tend to be less focused or go less deep into the arguments.
✓-	The question is largely informational in nature and/or does not go beyond a surface-level treatment of the readings. You will also receive a check-minus if your question makes it clear that you did not read all of the assigned readings (e.g., if you ask a question prompted by one reading that is answered in another).

Short Essays

You will write **3** short essays over the course of the semester, according to the schedule below. Each essay should be **750-1,250** words in length (no more than 1,250 words). For the first essay, I will ask you to focus on an argument in one of the Descartes readings (either the primary or secondary readings). For the second and third essays, I want you to write on an argument from something you're reading in preparation for your final project.

The format of your short essays should be as follows : the first half of the essay should reconstruct the argument you are focusing on. The second half of the essay should evaluate the argument. While your evaluation should be critical, it need not be negative. For example, you may see hidden assumptions in the argument that need to be clarified, or you may think the argument is promising and can be extended in certain ways. Regardless, your own evaluation of the argument should be clear.

The Capstone Project

Students who pass this class fulfill the Writing in the Major requirement for Philosophy. The Philosophy Program has identified the following five goals for your writing in this course :

GOALS FOR WRITING IN THE MAJOR

- 1) To write an essay that is clear, well-organized, and driven by a specific thesis relevant to the paper's topic.
- 2) To utilize effectively primary and secondary sources to develop the paper's argument.
- 3) To define and properly use technical terms and concepts.
- 4) To make distinctions between the presentation of relevant data and/or arguments made by others and the critical analysis of these materials.
- 5) To apply accurately theoretical models and/or disciplinary methods to specialized content.

With these goals in mind, you will be writing a research paper for this course at a length of 6,000 – 8,000 words (including any footnotes ; no longer than 8,000 words). Your research and writing for this paper will allow you to develop an expertise on a topic connected with consciousness and to hone your philosophical skills.

I will ask you to declare your topic early in the semester and to conduct your research over the semester. You will need research this topic both in primary and secondary sources. I would like at least **2** of your sources to be recent (i.e., within the last 5 years). This will require you to become familiar with our library's philosophy holdings and relevant philosophy databases.

If you think you lack any resources or skills that you need to complete this project well, I would urge you to seek help from the college librarians or the Writing Center.

3P Reports

Following the schedule listed on p. 10, I will ask you to submit regular reports on your progress on the capstone project. Your report should have three sections : **progress**, **problems**, and **plans** (hence, **3P**). In the schedule, I make some suggestions of what you should include the earlier reports, but after that it will be up to you what to include in this report, as long as you include something in each of the three sections. The reports will be graded on the following scale :

✓+	Demonstrates significant progress on the final project and/or a clear sense of direction and planning in the face of challenges.
✓	Demonstrates satisfactory progress on the final project and/or has met with some difficulties that are not clearly being overcome.
✓-	Does not demonstrate satisfactory progress on the final project and/or is stymied by the obstacles that have arisen.

While it is not required, you may submit additional materials with your 3P reports (not to exceed 2 pages of additional materials). The kinds of things that you might find helpful to submit include :

- > A draft thesis statement
- > A tentative outline
- > A draft introduction
- > A working bibliography
- > A section of an argument you are working on that is giving you trouble

If you do submit additional materials, I will be able to provide you feedback as you make progress on your paper. So, submit whatever you think will be helpful to you !

Presentations

I will also ask you to present your capstone project to the class. You will be responsible for 30 minutes of one class session. The purpose of this presentation is to help you work through your argument prior to finalizing your paper ; the discussion in class will help you refine and defend your view.

Consider your session as an opportunity to **teach the class**. I will expect you to present some part of your argument in a way that is accessible to your classmates (i.e., a group of philosophically sophisticated people who may not be familiar with your particular research topic), and then lead the class in a discussion on the topic. You should prepare a handout for the class that will facilitate your presentation. The format of the handout is up to you—it should be 1-2 pages at most and provide a framework for your presentation. The presentation will be graded on the handout (25%), the presentation itself (50%), and your ability to facilitate discussion on your topic (25%).

Readings and Schedule

The following texts are required:

- [DE] Descartes, René, Selected Philosophical Writings, translated by John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, Dugald Murdoch (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988).
- [SP] Spinoza, Benedict de, A Spinoza Reader, ed. Edwin Curley (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).
- [LE] Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm, Philosophical Essays, translated by Roger Ariew and Daniel Garber (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Pub. Co., 1989).
- [LV] Levine, Joseph, Purple Haze: The Puzzle of Consciousness (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

Other readings listed in the schedule will be available for download through Blackboard.

Tentative Course Outline

Week 1: Introduction and Pre-17th Century Theories of Consciousness

1/24: Introduction to the Course

- a. "Seventeenth Century Theories of Consciousness"
- b. "Consciousness"

(Both entries are in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)

1/26: Pre-17th century

- a. C.S. Lewis, "Conscience and Conscious"
- b. Montaigne, "Of Conscience"

Week 2: Descartes

1/31: Cogito and Transparency

- a. Descartes, Meditations on First Philosophy, Synopsis and Meditations 1 and 2 (DE 73-86)
- b. Descartes, Principles of Philosophy, Part I, §§1-30 (DE 160-170)
- c. Peter Markie, "The Cogito and its Importance"

2/2: Cartesian Ideas

- a. Descartes, Meditation 3 and Appendix to Second Replies, definitions and postulates (DE 86-98, 150-155)

[For the above readings, focus on how Descartes uses the concept "idea," not so much on the proofs for the existence of God.]

Week 3: Descartes (cont'd)

2/7: The Nature of the Cartesian Mind

- a. Descartes, Principles of Philosophy, Part I, §§31-76 (DE 170-189)
- b. Descartes, Meditation 6 (DE 110-122)
- c. Marleen Rozemond, "The Nature of the Mind"

2/9 : Descartes's Theory of Consciousness

- a. Descartes, *Objections and Replies* to the first through third meditations (up through "innate ideas") (DE 123-131)
- b. Daisie Radner, "Thought and Consciousness in Descartes"

Week 4 : Descartes (cont'd) & Spinoza

2/14 : Consciousness and Reflection in Descartes

- a. Review Descartes readings as useful for understanding the following paper.
- b. Vili Lähteenmäki, "Orders of Consciousness and Forms of Reflexivity in Descartes"

2/16 : Spinoza's Representational Theory of Mind

- a. Spinoza, *Ethics*, Part II, up through Proposition 14 (SP 115-128)
- b. Michael Della Rocca, "The Human Mind," chapter 3, §§1-6, from his *Spinoza* (pp. 89-122).

Week 5 : Spinoza

2/21 : Problems with Spinoza's Theory of Mind

- a. Spinoza, *Ethics*, remainder of Part II (SP 128-152)
- b. Margaret Dauber Wilson, "Objects, Ideas, and 'Minds': Comments on Spinoza's Theory of Mind"

2/23 : Spinoza on Consciousness, Part I

- a. Spinoza, Part III, up through proposition 9 (SP 152-160); also, for uses of the term "conscientia," look at 3p30d; 3def.aff1; 4Preface; 4p8 and d; 4p19d; 4p64d; 4Appendix32; 5p31s; 5p34s; 5p39s; and 5p42s
- b. Lee Rice, "Reflexive Ideas in Spinoza"

Week 6 : Spinoza & a Breath

2/28 : Spinoza on Consciousness, Part II

- a. Spinoza, Part V (SP 244-265)
- b. Don Garrett, "Representation and Consciousness in Spinoza's Naturalistic Theory of the Imagination"

3/1 : Breather

- a. No additional readings: use this day to reflect on Spinoza and Descartes as we prepare to look at Leibniz.

Week 7 : Leibniz

3/6 : Leibniz's Naturalized Theory of Mind

- a. Leibniz, "Discourse on Metaphysics" §§1-20 ; "Two Sects of Naturalists" (LE 35-53, 281-284)
- b. Leibniz, "General Principle useful in Explaining the Laws of Nature" (on Blackboard)
- c. Larry M. Jorgensen, "The Principle of Continuity and Leibniz's Theory of Consciousness," up through section 2 (pp. 223-232)

3/8 : Leibniz on Mental Representation and Perceptual Distinctness

- a. Leibniz, "What is an Idea ?" (on Blackboard)
- b. Leibniz, remainder of "Discourse on Metaphysics" and "Meditations on Knowledge, Truth, and Ideas" (LE 53-68, 23-27)
- c. Robert Brandom, "Leibniz and Degrees of Perception"

<< Spring Break : 3/12 - 3/16 >>

Week 8 : Leibniz

3/20 : Leibniz and Higher-Order Thinking

- a. Leibniz, "Principles of Nature and Grace" (LE 206-213)
- b. Alison Simmons, "Changing the Cartesian Mind : Leibniz on Sensation, Representation, and Consciousness"

3/22 : Leibniz's Theory of Consciousness

- a. Leibniz, "Monadology" and selection from New Essays Preface (LE 213-225, 291-299)
- b. Larry M. Jorgensen, "The Principle of Continuity and Leibniz's Theory of Consciousness," section 3 (pp. 232-248)

Week 9 : The Problem of Consciousness in the 21st Century

3/27 : Purple Haze, Chapter 1

3/29 : Purple Haze, Chapter 2

Week 10 : The Problem of Consciousness in the 21st Century

4/3 : Purple Haze, Chapter 3

4/5 : Guest : Alison Simmons

Evening of April 5

Colloquium with Alison Simmons, Samuel H. Wolcott Professor of Philosophy, Harvard University

"Re-Humanizing Descartes : What Descartes Really Said"

6 :00 p.m. in Davis Auditorium

Week 11 : The Problem of Consciousness in the 21st Century

4/10 : Purple Haze, Chapter 4

4/12 : Purple Haze, Chapter 5

Week 12 : Contemporary Theories & PRESENTATIONS

4/17 : Purple Haze, Chapter 6 & Coda

4/19 : Presentations 1 & 2

Week 13 : PRESENTATIONS

4/24 : Presentations 3, 4, & 5

4/26 : Presentations 6, 7, & 8

Week 14 : PRESENTATIONS

5/1 : Presentations 9 & 10

Schedule of Assignments

Each of the following assignments should be handed in via Blackboard by the Friday of the week that it is due. The assignments will be considered on time as long as they are in before midnight on Friday. Late assignments will be graded down 3 points per day late, and no assignment will be accepted more than 1 week late.

For each writing assignment (the short essays and the final project), please include a word count at the top of the first page. All writing assignments will be checked through Blackboard's plagiarism checker (which, of course, will be unnecessary).

Week 1 (1/27): First 3P Report – Tell me what you're thinking about for your topic, give me a good sense of what background you have (or expect to have from this course) that will enable you to write on that topic. Give me a sense for your overall plan for narrowing down the topic to a question or issue that you can cover.

Week 2 (2/3): Short Essay 1 (on Descartes)

Week 3 (2/10): Second 3P Report – By now you should have identified 10-15 sources that will help you narrow down your topic. You should either have copies of them in hand or have requested them from ILL. Give me a sense for how you plan to work through the sources to identify the *particular* question you want to address in your paper.

Week 4 (2/17): Short Essay 2 (on an argument of your choice)

Week 5 (2/24): Third 3P Report – This report should take the form of a proposal. By now you should have a clearer sense of what others are saying about your topic and generated a research question you want to pursue. State the question as clearly as possible and give your plan for developing the question.

Week 6 (3/2): Short Essay 3 (on an argument of your choice)

Week 7 (3/9): Fourth 3P Report – Progress/problems/plans

Week 8 (3/23): Nothing to hand in – continue to work on your research project

Week 9 (3/30): Fifth 3P Report – Progress/problems/plans

Week 10 (4/6): Nothing to hand in – continue to work on your research project

Week 11 (4/13): Sixth 3P Report – Progress/problems/plans

Final paper due in Blackboard by midnight, May 6

(Note: senior grades are due early, so late papers will not be accepted.)