

SYLLABUS FOR PHILOSOPHY 241: MIND, THOUGHT, AND CONSCIOUSNESS

Instructor	Course Info
Peter R. Murray	Philosophy 241
OH: Mon., Tues. 10am-12pm	Wed, Fri 12:20pm-1:40pm
Ladd 215, 518-580-5401	Ladd 307
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Course Description

We are remarkable creatures. On the one hand, we each have an exquisitely complex body—indeed, some would say that we essentially *are* these bodies—that is made up of an untold and constantly changing number of atoms and molecules, just like any other object in the universe. On the other, we are quite unlike almost everything else in the universe, at least so far as we know. For we are creatures with minds. That is, we are creatures capable of such things as reasoning, feeling, perceiving, remembering, believing, wanting, hoping, wishing, intending, celebrating, grieving, making a joke, falling in love, pursuing a dream, and a great deal more besides. Indeed, some would say that we essentially *are* our minds.

But what are minds? What is it to have a mind or to be a minded creature? Is a mind a special sort of substance or object in which mental processes take place? Is something's having a mind just a matter of its behaving or functioning in a certain way? And what is the relation of minds or having a mind to bodies or having a body, to our socio-cultural and linguistic context, and to rest of the natural world writ large? Is one's mind just one's body or a part of it, like one's brain? And so are mental phenomena just neurochemical phenomena in our skulls? If so, could one's mind survive the death of one's body? If not, how do our minds and our bodies interact? Does having a mind essentially depend on having a body at all, or could there be a disembodied mind? Can only creatures with organic, carbon-based bodies like ours have minds? Or can a computer or other creature made of silicon and aluminum have a mind? And how do we have to be thinking of what a mind is, if our answer to this question is, "Yes"?

These are among the questions that the philosophy of mind addresses and that we will take up in this class, and they are all still the subject of very active debate within philosophy and beyond. To structure our exploration of them, we will read a number of classic and contemporary works that were written by some of the most influential thinkers in the western philosophical tradition. As we will see, there are deep historical roots to contemporary discussions of, and answers to, these questions, but those discussions and answers have also been importantly shaped by the development and progress of science since the 17th century. Most broadly, our aim in this course is to come to a better understanding of ourselves and our place in the natural world through exploring these questions.

Course Objectives

There are many views of what philosophy is, but one view that will be central to our work in this class is that of philosophy as an activity, as something we do, rather than as a set of doctrines that we learn or memorize. As we will see, the heart of this philosophical activity

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consists in analyzing, evaluating, and critiquing the reasoning or argumentation that we present to persuade ourselves and others that certain conclusions are correct. The conclusions that we will be particularly interested in this course have to do with proposed answers to questions in the philosophy of mind, but the argument- and reasoning-related skills that we will practice and develop in this course are of much broader application and utility both in your other courses at Skidmore and elsewhere in your life.

Accordingly, the learning objectives in this course are for you to be able to:

- (1) Recognize, charitably reconstruct, and engage in productive ways with arguments in philosophical texts and with those of one's peers;
- (2) Develop, draft, revise, and polish a sustained, reasoned argument in a paper that addresses an argument presented in a philosophical text;
- (3) Work collaboratively with your peers to clarify your reasoning and writing by providing and incorporating feedback and suggestions on each other's work;
- (4) Describe the major positions and issues in the philosophy of mind that we will cover in this course, the reasoning that various authors have presented for and against those positions, the and the dialectical interrelations among those positions.

Course Materials

Philosophy of Mind (by Jaegwon Kim)

The PH 241 Readings page of the course *Blackboard* site has links to other works we read in this course.

Course Requirements

There are 100 possible points in this course. Your final grade in this course is determined by your participation in class and your performance on your reading responses, your papers, and your feedback on your peers' paper drafts:

1. Participation (worth 10 points, i.e., 10% of course grade)

To participate successfully in this class, you must:

- Read the assigned texts before class, think about them, and bring them to class;
- Read your peers' Reading Responses for a given class meeting before that class meets;
- Come to class consistently and on time (I keep track of attendance). *In addition, students who miss more than six classes, for whatever reason, will fail the course;*
- Participate actively in class discussions (I note down who participated after each class);

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- Bring questions to office hours, post questions or other issues for discussion to the Support Forum section of the course *Blackboard* site, and/or respond to questions and issues that other students have posted to the Support Forum.

2. Reading Responses (worth 30 points, i.e., 30% of course grade)

- You will post a 1- to 2-page (250- to 500-word) response to the non-Kim readings for one class each week on the Reading Responses page of the course *Blackboard* site. Reading responses for a given class must be posted to the Reading Responses page by 7pm the day before the class meets. See the PH 241 Assignments page of the course *Blackboard* site for guidelines on writing reading responses.
- For one class meeting during the semester, you will summarize your peers' responses to the readings for that class meeting, and come up with two questions with which to launch discussion for that class. See the Assignments page of the course *Blackboard* site for guidelines for reading responses presenters.

3. Papers (worth 40 points, i.e., 40% of course grade)

- You will write two five-page papers in this course. Each paper will count for 20 points (20% of your course grade).
- You will have two weeks to complete each paper. The first week, you will complete a draft of your paper, which you will turn in for feedback and suggestions for improvement from a peer in the class, based on guidelines that I will provide. Your peer reviewer will have two days to return your draft to you with their feedback and suggestions, and you will have the remainder of the two weeks to make revisions to your paper before turning in the final draft to me. Your Skidmore student ID number should be the only identifying information on both your first and final drafts.
- Late papers are accepted up to one week after the deadline, but they lose 1/3 of a letter grade per day. So, if a paper is of A- quality, but it is turned in an hour after the deadline, it will receive a B+. If the same paper is turned in 25 hours after the deadline, it will receive a B, and so on. Papers more than seven days late will not be accepted.

4. Peer Feedback on Paper Drafts (worth 20 points, i.e., 20% of course grade)

- For each of the two papers in this class, you will provide one of your peers with feedback and suggestions for improvement on their draft, using guidelines that I will provide. Each peer review will be worth 10 points (10% of the course grade).
- Your feedback will be graded on its helpfulness and level of engagement with the paper you review. See the Assignments page of the course *Blackboard* site for guidelines on providing peer feedback and a rubric for assessing the quality of their draft.
- Peer feedback on paper drafts may not be turned in late.

5. Academic Integrity

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- Your work in this course is governed by the Skidmore College Honor Code and Code of Conduct (https://www.skidmore.edu/student_handbook/honor-code.php).
- Violations of the Honor Code and/or Code of Conduct will result in your failing this course. If you have any questions regarding whether particular actions constitute violations of the Honor Code or Code of Conduct, please see me to discuss them.

Final course grades are determined according to the following scale:

F = below 60 pts	D+ = 67–69 pts D = 63–66 pts D- = 60–62 pts	C+ = 77–79 pts C = 73–76 pts C- = 70–72 pts	B+ = 87–89 pts B = 93–86 pts B- = 80–82 pts	A+ = 97–100 pts A = 93–96 pts A- = 90–92 pts
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Academic Resources

Skidmore College has a variety of resources available to support your work in this and other courses. Please seek them out and let me know if you have any questions about them. An online listing of available resources is at <https://www.skidmore.edu/advising/support.php>. I have already contacted Student Academic Services about arranging a peer tutor for this course, and I will let you know if we are able to identify someone who can fill that role.

Skidmore is also committed to supporting your mental health and wellbeing. If you—like many college students—are experiencing depression or anxiety, suffering from an eating disorder, struggling with some other psychological difficulty or trauma, or if you just need someone with whom to talk, the Counseling Center is an excellent place to get the help you need. More information is available online at <https://www.skidmore.edu/counseling/services.php>. If you need immediate assistance at any time of the day or night, call Campus Safety at 518-580-5567, and they can connect you with the counselor on call.

Furthermore, Skidmore College is committed to providing a learning, working, and living environment that reflects and promotes personal integrity, civility, and mutual respect. We have the right to be free from all forms of abuse, assault, harassment, and coercive conduct, including sexual and gender-based misconduct. Skidmore College considers sexual and gender-based misconduct to be one of the most serious violations of the values and standards of the College. Unwelcome sexual contact of any form is a violation of our personal integrity and our right to a safe environment and violates Skidmore's values. Skidmore College will not tolerate sexual or gender-based misconduct in any form. Sexual and gender-based misconduct is also prohibited by federal Title IX regulations.

I, like the rest of the Skidmore College faculty, am committed to supporting you and upholding gender equity laws as outlined by Title IX. Therefore, you should know that, if you choose to confide in me or another member of Skidmore's faculty or staff regarding an occurrence of sexual or gender-based misconduct, we are obligated to tell Skidmore's Title IX Deputy Coordinator. The Title IX Deputy Coordinator will assist you in connecting with all possible resources for support and reporting both on and off campus. If you wish to report or discuss an

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occurrence of sexual or gender-based misconduct confidentially or anonymously, I can help direct you to the appropriate resources on campus where you can do that.

If you are a student with a disability and you require academic accommodations for this course, please contact the Coordinator of Student Access Services (Meg Hegener, 518-580-8150, mhegener@skidmore.edu) to arrange your accommodations.

You may also find the following specifically philosophy-related resources to be useful:

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy

<http://plato.stanford.edu/>

Jim Pryor's Guidelines on Writing Philosophy Papers

<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>

Peter Horban's "Writing a Philosophy Paper"

<http://www.sfu.ca/philosophy/resources/writing.html>

UNC-Chapel Hill's Writing Center Guide for Philosophy

<http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/philosophy/>

The Pink Guide to Philosophy

<https://sites.google.com/a/wellesley.edu/pinkguidetophilosophy/>

Strategies for Success

Engaging well in the activity of philosophy is an acquired skill that improves with practice, and the assignments in this class have been organized to provide you with a series of scaffolded opportunities to practice that skill. The readings have been pared down as much as possible to allow you to focus directly on the relevant arguments without losing sight of their context. The reading responses give you an opportunity to reconstruct the argument for a particular view and to begin to think about how that argument might be critiqued and how it is related to other arguments we are addressing in this course. This prepares you for our in-class discussions, in which we will clarify and refine our understanding of the material in the course, and each of you will have a chance to shape our discussions through the questions you come up with to launch them. The papers build on the preliminary work you have done in your reading responses and in-class discussions and allow you to extend and bring further clarity to your thoughts in a sustained piece of reasoning on a single topic. Finally, your peer reviews give you the opportunity to use your own emerging expertise and proficiency with argumentation to help someone else improve their work, to benefit in your own work from the expertise and proficiency of someone else in the class, and to make sure that you are writing for the correct audience in your papers: your peers, rather than for me. So, trite as it may sound, my best advice for how to succeed in this class is really for you to do the assigned work.

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Though each student is required to do his or her own work, I highly encourage you to work on and discuss the readings in pairs or groups in preparation for writing your reading responses and papers. Often, a breakthrough in your own understanding of the argument for a view is as close as another student working on the same thing. Also, please do come to my office hours to talk through any difficulties you are having with the course material. I've been where you are, and I am here and want to help. The week of 11/3–11/5, we're going to have instructor-student midterm status meetings in my office hours to make sure we're all on the same page regarding how you're doing in the course, and I encourage you to fill out the Instructor Feedback Form that is linked from the course *Blackboard* site to let me know how I can help you better.

Recent scientific studies show that multitasking, e.g., checking email or texting in class or while doing homework, makes us dramatically less productive, leads to problems with concentration, organization, and attention to detail, and is associated with short-term drops in IQ of up to fifteen points (Ophir, Nass, and Wagner (2009). "Cognitive control in media multitaskers". *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, September 15, 2009, vol. 106 no. 37, 15583-15587; http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/4471607.stm). A single-tasking technique that I recommend is to work in 25-minute units, during which you do only one thing, e.g., your logic homework, with a 5-minute break between units to do whatever you want (eventually you can work up to 45-minute units, with 15-minute breaks between units). I also recommend that you set a timer to keep track of your units and breaks and that you use an internet blocker like Freedom to help keep distractions at bay while you're doing a unit. See the Course Resources page of the course *Blackboard* site for links to various apps and services that you might find helpful to help you focus and be more productive.

A final, related note on using computers and other technology in class: There is a burgeoning body evidence to suggest that using computers or other devices to take notes in class, rather than writing notes by hand, leads to decreased retention of course material and poorer performance on tests (Mueller and Oppenheimer (2014). "The Pen Is Mightier Than the Keyboard: Advantages of Longhand Over Laptop Note Taking". *Psychological Science*, June 2014, vol. 25 no. 6, 1159-1168). However, I have generally taken my class notes on a computer, and I will allow you to do so in this class, subject to the following condition: you may only use your computer or other technology in class to take notes. Students who check email, text, or surf the internet during class are not only doing themselves a disservice, their activities are highly distracting to those around them, and I have a responsibility to maintain a learning-conducive environment in my classroom. Using an internet blocker like Freedom during class time can be highly effective for avoiding temptation.

Course Schedule (subject to revision)

[iCalendar link for papers and paper draft reviews available on the course *Blackboard* site]

Unit	Topic	Reading for Class
Introduction	9/9: Introduction to the course, syllabus, arguments	NO READINGS

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Historical Precedents	9/11: Plato and the immortality of the soul (<i>psuche</i>)	• <i>Phaedo</i>, 78a-94e
	9/16: Plato (cont).	• <i>Phaedo</i>, 78a-94e
Interactionist Substance Dualism	9/18: Descartes' "real distinction" argument	• Kim, Ch. 2 (pp. 31-46) • Descartes, <i>Meditations</i> II and VI
	9/23: Arnauld's criticism of the "real distinction" argument	• Arnauld and Descartes, "Fourth Objections and Replies" (excerpt, pp. 125-30, 140-7)
	9/25: Mind-body interaction and union	• Kim, Ch. 2 (pp. 46-54) • Princess Elizabeth and Descartes, <i>Selections from Correspondence</i> (pp. 11-21)
	9/30: Knowledge of other minds and category mistakes	• Ryle, "Descartes' Myth" (pp. 11-24)
Logical Behaviorism	10/2: The meaning of psychological sentences	• Kim, Ch. 3 (pp. 61-71) • Carnap, "Psychology in Physical Language" (pp. 39-44)
	10/7: Objections to Behaviorism: Super-Spartans	• Kim, Ch. 3 (pp. 71-87) • Putnam, "Brains and Behavior" (pp. 325-41)
Identity Theory	10/9: Type physicalism	• Kim, Ch. 4 (pp. 91-114) • Smart, "Sensations and Brain Processes" (pp. 141-56)
	10/14: Multiple Realizability and token physicalism	• Kim, Ch. 4 (pp. 114-25, esp. 121-125) • Fodor, "Special Sciences, or The Disunity of Science as a Working Hypothesis" (pp. 97-115)
	Topics for Paper 1 distributed	
Functionalism	10/16: Computational model of the mind	• Kim, Ch. 5 (pp. 129-51) • Putnam, "The Nature of Mental States" (pp. 73-9)
	10/21: Mind as causal structure	• Kim, Ch. 6 (pp. 169-79) • Lewis, "An Argument for the Identity Theory" (pp. 17-25)
	Drafts for Paper 1 DUE	
	10/23: Objections to Functionalism	• Kim, Ch. 5 (151-6), Ch. 6 (179-89) • Block, "Troubles with Functionalism" (excerpt, pp. 94-8)
	Reviews of Paper 1 Drafts DUE	

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	10/28: Functionalism recap Paper 1 DUE	NO READINGS
Artificial Intelligence	10/30: The Turing Test Sign up for Instructor-Student Midterm Status Meetings in Office Hours week of 11/4–11/6	• Kim, Ch. 5 (pp. 156-60) • Turing, “Computing Machinery and Intelligence” (pp. 433-53)
	11/4: Chinese Room Argument	• Kim Ch. 5 (pp. 160-5) • Searle, “Minds, Brains, and Programs” (pp. 417-24)
Mental Causation	11/6: The many problems of mental causation	• Kim, Ch. 7 (pp. 193-223)
Consciousness	11/11: Physicalism and the subjective character of experience	• Kim, Ch. 9 (pp. 263-77) • Nagel, “What is it Like to be a Bat?” (pp. 435-50)
	11/13: The Knowledge Argument against Physicalism	• Jackson, “What Mary Didn’t Know” (pp. 291-5)
Mental Content	11/18: Content Externalism I: Twin Earth	Kim Ch. 8 (pp. 227-8, 241-54) • Putnam, “The Meaning of ‘Meaning’” (excerpt, pp. 581-96)
	11/20: Content Externalism II: Tharthritis	• Burge, “Individualism and the Mental” (excerpt, pp. 597-606)
The Extended Mind	12/2: Is my cell phone a literal part of my mind? Topics for Paper 2 distributed	• Clark and Chalmers, “The Extended Mind” (7-19) • Adams and Aizawa, “Defending the Bounds of Cognition” (67-80)
Naturalism in the Philosophy of Mind	12/4: “Physical” and physicalism	• Montero, “The Body Problem” (pp. 183-200) • Stroud, “The Physical World” (pp. 263-77)
	12/9: Liberal naturalism Drafts of Paper 2 DUE	• Stroud, “The Charm of Naturalism” (pp. 43-55) • [Optional] McDowell, “Naturalism and the Philosophy of Mind” (pp. 91-105)
Wrap up and Recap	12/11: Course Recap Reviews of Paper 2 Drafts DUE	NO READINGS

Paper 2 Due: Tuesday, Dec. 15, 12pm, Ladd 307