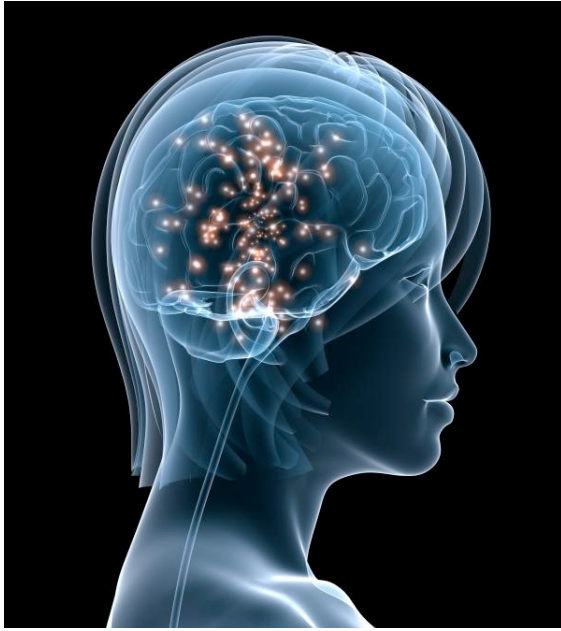




PH-241: Mind, Thought, and Consciousness

Spring 2011
L.M. Jorgensen

Our concept of mind is fundamental to how we think of ourselves and of others. And yet, it is a vexed question just what the mind *is*—its nature and its relation to other things that matter to us (our bodies, our histories, our abilities to reflect, imagine, and project our actions into the future and act as responsible agents, among other things).

This course will introduce you to a *philosophical* approach to the study of mind (as opposed to a psychological or biological approach to the study of mind). We will try to come to an understanding of the nature of the mind and its relation to the “physical stuff” of the brain and body. We will begin by considering some of the metaphysical foundations for a philosophy of mind and the nature of mental representation and the “content” of thought. We will finish the semester by tackling the “hard problem” of consciousness.

There is a long history to these questions, and we will start the semester with a whirlwind tour of the history of mind and consciousness. This will prepare us well for a careful study of what *today’s* professional philosophers are saying in answer to these questions.

Course Texts

The following texts are required for this course and are available in the Skidmore Shop:

Plato, *Phaedo*, tr. G.M.A. Grube, 2nd Ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publ., 1980; ISBN: 9780915144181)

Philosophy of Mind: Classical and Contemporary Readings, ed. David J. Chalmers (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002; ISBN: 9780195145816) [DC]

John Heil, *Philosophy of Mind: A Contemporary Introduction*, 2nd Ed. (New York: Routledge, 2004; ISBN: 9780415283564)

Torin Alter and Robert J. Howell, *A Dialogue on Consciousness* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009; ISBN: 9780195375299)

There will also be a *Course Packet* [CP], which I will distribute on the first day of class. There are a couple of readings from the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (<http://plato.stanford.edu>), identified in the schedule as [SEP].

Instructor Information

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Course Objectives

There are four main objectives for this course:

1. *Identify* the main positions in some areas of contemporary philosophy of mind, *articulate* the motivations and reasons supporting these positions, and *evaluate* the relative merits of the arguments given in their defense;
2. *Formulate* your own views about topics in contemporary philosophy of mind (at least provisionally) and *defend* your views orally and in writing;
3. *Collaborate* with others in the class, helping them clarify, sharpen, and strengthen the defense of their views.
4. *Think hard* about the nature of mind.

Your grade in this class will be a function of how well you accomplish these objectives. The fourth objective is notoriously difficult to measure, but I will try to evaluate your success in accomplishing the other three in the following ways:

A. Participation and Group Work (20%)

Your participation in class will give me one way to see how well you are accomplishing each of the objectives above. Also, you will work in groups to discuss and develop your own views on the topics of the course. Your work in the groups will give me a way of seeing how well you are doing on the third objective. (More details about the group work is given below.)

B. Two Exams (20% each)

The exams will ask you to identify, compare, and synthesize material we are studying, allowing me to see how well you are doing in achieving the first objective. This is the primary way I will be able to see the breadth of your learning. (Note: the second exam will take place during the final exam period, and it will be cumulative. More details about the exams are given below.)

C. Two Papers (20% each)

You will write two papers, 6-8 pages each. Your papers give you the best opportunities for achieving the second goal. This is the primary way I will be able to see the depth of your learning.

D. Peer Reviews (calculated as part of the paper grades)

The peer review process is intended as a way for you and your classmates to collaborate on your writing. As such, it gives me an additional way of measuring how well you are accomplishing the third objective.

Attendance and Participation

Attendance: I expect you to attend each class unless you are ill, attending to a family emergency, or fulfilling a religious commitment. Unexcused absences will reduce your participation grade by 5 percentage points. **However, six or more absences, whatever the reason, will result in automatic failure of the course.**

Participation should not be understood in terms of simply promoting your own views—if that's *all* you did, you would not be a good participant. Good participation means that you are actively engaged *during the class time* in trying to understand clearly the arguments being presented. So, even if you don't yet have a view of your own on the issue under discussion, good participation will include asking clarifying questions (of me and of your classmates), raising possible counterexamples, proposing alternative ways of understanding an argument, uncovering underlying assumptions, and any other way of honestly and respectfully engaging with the issues being discussed.

Papers

You will write two 6-8 page papers this semester, due on the following schedule:

FIRST PAPER

Feb. 24: First Draft of Paper 1 due

Mar. 3: Final Draft of Paper 1 due

SECOND PAPER

Apr. 19: First Draft of Paper 2 due

Apr. 26: Final Draft of Paper 2 due

Philosophical writing is different than writing in many other disciplines. For those who have not had a previous philosophy class (or for those who simply need a refresher), I will schedule an optional meeting where I will discuss some of the discipline-specific conventions. These conventions are designed to get you to think more thoroughly about your topic, and so you should expect writing a philosophy paper to be hard work (because the questions themselves are not easy!).

I *strongly recommend* that you give yourself a lot of time to develop your ideas on the paper as you write it. Treat early drafts as mere sketches of notes, not as a final product. One of the most common mistakes students fall into with their writing is in thinking that their first draft is pretty close to a final draft. In my experience (both personally and in working with other students), a first draft is a *long way* from being a final draft, and it often takes several rounds of careful revision before you have something close to a good final draft.

Peer Reviews

For each of the two papers, you will be asked to provide constructive comments on two of your peers' first drafts, and you will also receive feedback on your drafts from two of your classmates. The aim of this is to engage in a collaborative effort to improve each person's argument. I will provide more details on the review procedure closer to the due date for the first draft of paper one.

Group Work, Study Guides, Notebooks, Lunch with the Professor, and Exams

The items listed above are interconnected, and so I will address them all under one heading. Here is an overview of how the assignments will go:

1. **Study Guides:** For every class session (other than exam days), I will distribute a **study guide** to help you focus your attention on specific things in the readings and to read actively. There will be 25 study guides over the course of the semester.
2. **Notebook:** I want you to have a **dedicated notebook** for your study guide responses. This could be (a) a *composition book*, (b) a *spiral-bound notebook*, or (c) a *three-ring notebook* in which you place typed notes. Whichever option you choose, I want you to keep **only** study-guide answers and class notes in this notebook.
3. **Small Groups:** Everyone will be a part of a **small group**. The groups are expected to meet at least once per week, for at least an hour. I will assign small groups on the first day of class. The purpose of these groups is to review the answers you've come up with for the study guides and to discuss any questions that may have come up during our class sessions. *Note:* The small group time is not the time to *do* the study guides—it's time to *review and discuss* your answers with one another as well as anything else relevant to the course.
4. **Group Rep. Meeting:** Every *other* week, **one person** from your group will be responsible for attending a **meeting with Professor Jorgensen** (preferably lunch, if it fits with everyone's schedule) to report on what the groups have discussed. There will be a **report form** posted online that you should fill out and email to Professor Jorgensen before the meeting. The representative from the group will rotate, so that each student will be responsible for attending the meeting with Prof. Jorgensen at least once during the semester. [We need a better name for this meeting. Suggestions?]
5. **Exams:** The payoff of all of this work will be on the exams. The notebook that you are developing throughout the semester will be your study guide for the exams. Not only that, but **you will be permitted to make use of your notebook during the exam!**

The exams will be cumulative. The benefit to you is this: since the exams are cumulative, if you perform better on the final exam than on the midterm exam, I will count the score on the final exam twice and throw out the score for your midterm.

6. **Grading of group work:** Your grade for the group work will be a composite of three things:
 - a. *Attendance at the regular group meeting* (33%). Absences are permitted only for illness, family emergency, or religious observance. Any absences (excused or unexcused) will be noted on the Group Rep Report.
 - b. *Evaluations from your group mates* (33%). I will collect evaluations from your group mates multiple times throughout the semester.
 - c. *Evaluation of participation during the Group Rep Meeting* (33%). I will grade your participation at the Group Rep Meeting and the report you provide.

A Dose of Realism

This is a challenging class. But this is a challenging *topic*.

For many of the issues we will discuss, there is no consensus among philosophers. (Or, for that matter, among psychologists, cognitive scientists, neuroscientists, and the like.) If we (as philosophers) are going to make headway on these problems, we will have to be *at the top of our game*.

That said, this is part of what makes this course so exciting! Philosophy of mind is one of the most active fields in philosophy today, and you have an opportunity to get in on the party! But, since there's a lot of ground to cover, the readings are extensive and sometimes difficult. However, I don't doubt that you all are capable of making sense of them if you put in the time. I don't expect *any* knowledge of academic philosophy coming into this class, but I do expect that you will work hard.

As such, I will expect a fair amount of reading and thinking *outside* of the classroom. I have arranged the readings so that, **on average, you will have to spend 1 – 1½ hours reading for each class session**, in addition to the ~½ hour working on the study guide and meetings with your groups. (Note: this is consistent with the general college expectation of a 2:1 ratio of work outside of class to work in class.) ***You should look at your schedule for the semester now and make sure you can devote the time to this class.***

Maintaining the sustained and focused attention necessary for reading philosophy is not easy. It will require you to draw upon deeper resources of determination, to prevent your mind from straying, to keep the digital world at bay for just a little bit, to search out a chain of reasoning from its beginning to its end without losing the trail somewhere in the middle. There are tricks that will help you do this:

- actively outline a passage as you read it;
- jot down questions as they occur to you and reflect on them after you've finished reading the passage;
- go back over ("worry over") the difficult parts of a reading, and don't proceed until you've gotten a handle on it;
- turn off email and texting for 45 minute increments of time, take a 10 minute break, return for another 45 minute installment, etc.

You will have to discover the tricks that work best for you. But the goal is the same: to actively and attentively reflect on a hard problem for a sustained period of time. To expect this of oneself requires courage and resolve.

Tentative Schedule

Below is a schedule of readings and assignments. It is possible that we will get behind on the schedule as the semester progresses. I will announce any changes as they arise.

Week 1

January 25 & 27

TUESDAY: INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

THURSDAY: PLATO ON THE SOUL

Heil, Chapter 1

Plato, *Phaedo* (pp. 57c-91c)

Study Guide #1

Week 2

February 1 & 3

TUESDAY: PLATO ON IMMORTALITY AND HARMONY

Plato, *Phaedo* (pp. 91c-118a)

Plato, *Republic*, Book IV, 434c-445e (CP, pp. 3-14)

Study Guide #2

THURSDAY: ARISTOTLE ON THE SOUL

Aristotle's *De Anima*, Book I, chapter 1 and Book II, Chapters 1-3 (CP, pp. 17-24)

Christopher Shields, "Aristotle's Psychology," §§1-5 (SEP)

Study Guide #3

Week 3

February 8 & 10

TUESDAY: ARISTOTLE ON THE SOUL

Aristotle's *De Anima*, Book III, Chapters 4-6 and 9-10 (CP, pp. 25-31)

Christopher Shields, "Aristotle's Psychology," §§6-8 with supplements (SEP)

Study Guide #4

THURSDAY: DESCARTES'S DUALISM

Heil, Chapter 2

René Descartes

a. *Principles of Philosophy* (selections) (CP, pp. 35-39)

b. *Passions of the Soul* (selections) (CP, pp. 41-64)

Study Guide #5

First Group Rep. Meeting w/ Prof. Jorgensen

Week 4

February 15 & 17

TUESDAY: HOBBS AND LOCKE

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (selections) (CP, pp. 67-80)

John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Knowledge* (selections) (CP, pp. 83-105)

Study Guide #6

THURSDAY: LEIBNIZ AND MALEBRANCHE

Heil, Chapter 3

G.W. Leibniz

- a. "What is an Idea?" (CP, p. 109)
- b. Letter to Queen Sophie Charlotte of Prussia, "On What is Independent of Sense and Matter" (CP, pp. 111-117)
- c. Preface to the *New Essays on Human Understanding* (CP, pp. 119-136)

Study Guide #7

Week 5

February 22 & 24

TUESDAY: NON-CARTESIAN SUBSTANCE DUALISM

Heil, Chapter 4

E.J. Lowe, "Substance Dualism" (CP, pp. 139-161)

Study Guide #8

THURSDAY: PROPERTY DUALISM

Heil, Chapter 13

Raymond M. Smullyan, "An Unfortunate Dualist" (DC, p. 31)

Donald Davidson, "Mental Events" (DC, pp. 116-125)

Study Guide #9

Paper 1, Draft 1 Due

Second Group Rep. Meeting w/ Prof. Jorgensen

Week 6

March 1 & 3

TUESDAY: CAUSATION AND CONFLICT 1

Jaegwon Kim, "The Many Problems of Mental Causation" (DC, pp. 170-179)

Karen Bennett, "Why the Exclusion Problem Seems Intractable, and How, Just Maybe, to Tract It" (CP, pp. 165-191)

Study Guide #10

Peer Review Due

THURSDAY: CAUSATION AND CONFLICT 2

Tamar Gendler, "Alief in Action (and Reaction)" (CP, pp. 195-228)

Study Guide #11

Paper 1, Final Draft Due

Week 7

March 8 & 10

TUESDAY: MIDTERM EXAM

THURSDAY: BEHAVIORISM

Heil, Chapter 5

Gilbert Ryle, "Descartes's Myth" (DC, pp. 32-38)

Rudolf Carnap, Section 1 only (DC, pp. 39-40)

Study Guide #12

Third Group Rep. Meeting w/ Prof. Jorgensen

SPRING BREAK

March 14-18

Week 8

March 22 & 24

TUESDAY: THE IDENTITY THEORY

Heil, Chapter 6

U.T. Place, "Is Consciousness a Brain Process?" (DC, pp. 55-60)

Recommended: J.J.C. Smart, "The Identity Theory of Mind" (SEP)

Study Guide #13

THURSDAY: FUNCTIONALISM

Heil, Chapter 7

Jerry Fodor, "The Mind-Body Problem" (CP, pp. 231-245) [Easier]

Hilary Putnam, "The Nature of Mental States" (DC, pp. 73-79) [Difficult]

Study Guide #14

Week 9

March 29 & 31

TUESDAY: THE NATURE OF REPRESENTATION

Heil, Chapter 8

Franz Brentano, "The Distinction Between Mental and Physical Phenomena" (selections) (DC, pp. 479-484)

Fred Dretske, "A Recipe for Thought" (DC, pp. 491-499)

Recommended: David Woodruff Smith, "Phenomenology" (SEP)

Study Guide #15

THURSDAY: CAN COMPUTERS THINK?

A.M. Turing, "Computing Machinery and Intelligence" (CP, pp. 249-264)

John R. Searle, "Can Computers Think?" (DC, pp. 669-675)

Study Guide #16

Fourth Group Rep. Meeting w/ Prof. Jorgensen

Week 10

April 5 & 7

TUESDAY: INTENTIONALITY AND PROPOSITIONAL ATTITUDES

Heil, Chapter 11

Daniel C. Dennett, "True Believers: The Intentional Strategy and Why It Works" (DC, pp. 556-568)

Study Guide #17

THURSDAY: QUALIA

Heil, Chapter 9

Thomas Nagel, "What's it Like to be a Bat?" (DC, pp. 219-226)

Joseph Levine, "Materialism and Qualia: The Explanatory Gap" (DC, pp. 354-361)

Study Guide #18

Week 11

April 12 & 14

TUESDAY: CONSCIOUSNESS, DAY ONE

Dialogue on Consciousness, "Monday" (pp. 1-15)

Ned Block, "Concepts of Consciousness" (DC, pp. 206-218)

Recommended: Larry M. Jorgensen, "Seventeenth-Century Theories of Consciousness" (SEP)

Study Guide #19

THURSDAY: CONSCIOUSNESS, DAY TWO

Dialogue on Consciousness, "Tuesday" (pp. 16-35)

David Chalmers, "Consciousness and its Place in Nature," skipping §§6-7 (DC, pp. 247-272)

Study Guide #20

Fifth Group Rep. Meeting w/ Prof. Jorgensen

Week 12

April 19 & 21

TUESDAY: CONSCIOUSNESS, DAY THREE

Dialogue on Consciousness, "Wednesday" (pp. 36-55)

David Lewis, "What Experience Teaches" (DC, pp. 281-294)

Study Guide #21

Paper 2, Draft 1 Due

THURSDAY: CONSCIOUSNESS, DAY FOUR

Dialogue on Consciousness, "Thursday" (pp. 56-70)

Saul Kripke, "Naming and Necessity" (DC, pp. 329-334)

Christopher Hill, "Imaginability, Conceivability, Possibility and the Mind-Body Problem" (DC, pp. 334-341)

Study Guide #22

Peer Review Due

Week 13

April 26 & 28

TUESDAY: CONSCIOUSNESS, DAYS FIVE & SIX

Dialogue on Consciousness, "Friday" and "Saturday" (pp. 71-107)

Barbara Montero, "The Body Problem" (CP, pp. 267-284)

Study Guide #23

Paper 2, Draft 2 Due

THURSDAY: DIRECTIONS IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF MIND I

Andy Clark & David J. Chalmers, "The Extended Mind" (DC 643-651)

Fred Adams & Ken Aizawa, "The Bounds of Cognition" (CP, pp. 287-308)

Study Guide #24

Sixth Group Rep. Meeting w/ Prof. Jorgensen

Week 14

May 5

TUESDAY: DIRECTIONS IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF MIND II

Thomas Nagel, "Conceiving the Impossible and the Mind-Body Problem" (CP, pp. 311-321)

Mario De Caro, "Varieties of Naturalism" (CP, pp. 325-334)

Study Guide #25

Final Exam: Tuesday, May 10, 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.