

Philosophy of Mind (Phil 178)

Fall 2016

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Course Description

We take it that human beings have minds and that inanimate objects—like toasters, for instance—do not. But what does it mean to have a mind? In this course, we will pursue this question by tackling several related questions, including:

Is the mind identical to the brain?
What does it mean to have a thought?
Can computers think?
Can empirical science fully explain the phenomenon of consciousness?

As we shall see, there are no easy answers to these questions. However, thinking about the mind in a rigorous manner will allow us to better understand ourselves and our place in the world.

Course Requirements and Grading

Student grades will be determined as follows:

70%: Three, five-page papers
30%: Class participation

The class participation score will be determined by student participation in weekly, in-class group discussions. To earn credit for participation, each group must submit a one-page summary of the discussion at the beginning of the course meeting following the discussion (usually a Tuesday). One group member will write the summary and the other members should sign as participants.

Statement on Americans with Disabilities Procedures:

Howard University is committed to providing an educational environment that is accessible to all students. In accordance with this policy, students in need of accommodations due to a disability should contact the Office of the Dean for Special Services for verification and determination of reasonable accommodations as soon as possible after admission to the University or at the beginning of each semester. The Dean of the Office of Special Student Services can be reached at (202) 238-2420.

Plagiarism and cheating:

Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Evidence of dishonesty will be pursued, and confirmation will result in an "F" for the course. Students are responsible for knowing which actions constitute plagiarism. Please refer to the Howard University Student Handbook, p.114.

Texts:

David Chalmers, *Philosophy of Mind: Classical and Contemporary Readings* (Oxford University Press, 2002).

All additional readings will be posted to Blackboard.

Course Schedule:

(Note that I may alter the reading schedule.)

Week 1: Dualism

Reading: Chalmers, Ch.1: Descartes, "Meditations on First Philosophy (II and VI)" and Ch. 4: Smullyan, "An Unfortunate Dualist."

Week 2: Behaviorism

Reading: Chalmers, Ch. 5: Ryle "Descartes' Myth" and Ch. 7: Putnam, "Brains and Behavior."

Week 3: Identity Theory

Reading: Chalmers, Ch. 8: Place, "Is Consciousness a Brain Process?" and Ch. 9: Smart, "Sensations and Brain Processes."

September 8th: No Class.

First paper topics distributed.

Week 4: Functionalism

Reading: Chalmers, Ch. 11: Putnam “The Nature of Mental States” and Ch. 14, Block “Troubles with Functionalism.”

Week 5: Can Computers Think?

Reading: Alan Turing, “Computing Machinery and Intelligence,” (Blackboard)
Chalmers, Ch. 63: Searle, “Can Computers Think?”

First paper due.

Week 6: Consciousness: Foundational Issues

Reading: Chalmers, Ch. 24: Block “Concepts and Consciousness” and Ch. 25:
Nagel “What is it Like to Be a Bat?”

Sept.29th: Guest Lecture: Bryce Huebner, Georgetown University

Week 7: Consciousness: Foundational Issues

Reading: Chalmers, Ch. 26: Dennett, “Quining Qualia,” Wittgenstein,
Philosophical Investigations (selections)(Blackboard)

Week 8: Consciousness: The Knowledge Argument

Reading: Chalmers, Ch. 28: Jackson “Epiphenomenal Qualia” and Ch. 29: Lewis,
“What Experience Teaches.”

Second paper topics distributed.

Week 9: Consciousness: Modal Arguments

Reading: Chalmers, Ch. 32: Kripke, “Naming and Necessity (Excerpt)” and Ch.
33: Hill, “Imaginability, Conceivability, Possibility and the Mind-Body Problem.”

Week 10: Consciousness and Intentionality

Reading: Chalmers, Ch. 38: McGinn “Can We Solve the Mind-Body Problem?”
Ch. 44: Brentano, “The Distinction Between Mental and Physical Phenomena,”
and Ch. 48: Brandom, “Reasoning and Representing.”

Second paper due.

Week 11: Propositional Attitudes

Reading: Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (selections), Chalmers, Ch.
50: Sellars, “Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind (Excerpt).”

Week 12: Propositional Attitudes

Chalmers, Ch. 51: Fodor, “Propositional Attitudes” and Ch. 52: Dennett, “True
Believers: The Intentional Strategy and Why It Works.”

November 10th: No Class

Week 13: Propositional Attitudes

Reading: Reading: Kukla and Lance, “Speaking and Thinking.” (Blackboard),
Chalmers, Ch. 53: Churchland, “Eliminative Materialism and the Propositional
Attitudes.”

Final paper topics distributed.

Nov. 15th: Guest Speaker: Rebecca Kukla, Georgetown University

Week 14: Catch-up

Week 15: Internalism and Externalism

Reading: Chalmers, Ch. 54: Putnam, “The Meaning of ‘Meaning’” and Ch. 57:
McKinsey, “Anti-Individualism and Privileged Access.”

Final paper will be due during the reading period.