

Minds, Machines and Persons

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Philosophy 329: Mon, Wed 3.50 - 5.10, Murray Hall 204

Office hours: Wed 12 - 1, Philosophy Dept 526, or by appointment

Synopsis

We all have thoughts, experiences, beliefs, desires, hopes and dreams — in short, we all have *minds*. But what are minds? Is your mind just some computation taking place in your brain — or does it defy explanation in physical terms? Is having a mind a matter of behaving a certain way, or having a mechanism that works in a certain way, so that cleverly built machines would have minds too? And what are *we*, anyway — are we just machines ourselves? Are we souls, or animals, or something else? What makes me a different person from you, but the same person I was a decade ago? These are some of the oldest philosophical questions, yet they have important ramifications for the future of humanity; we will explore some answers, and raise some new questions along the way.

Learning Goals

The main aim of this course is to familiarize students with some key issues and debates within the philosophy of mind. Students should thereby develop their ability to think clearly and critically, to engage in abstract reasoning, and to analyze, construct and present philosophical arguments.

Requirements

Grades will be determined as follows:

- attendance, participation in class discussion, and three reading responses (20%);
- five short homeworks throughout the semester (25%);
- a midterm exam (25%);
- a final paper of 1500-2000 words (30%).

Readings

There is no required text for the course, and all readings will be available on Canvas. However, many of the readings (those which are *ed in the schedule below) are in David Chalmers's edited collection *Philosophy of Mind: Classical and Contemporary Readings*, which I recommend that you purchase if you can.

Guidelines

- **Reading:** Every week there will be around 2-3 readings assigned: usually around 30 pages in total. (Readings in square brackets on the schedule below are optional.) Doing the reading carefully is essential for being able to follow and participate in class! You should budget around 4 hours of work outside class per week; if it's taking you significantly less, you probably aren't reading carefully enough. You should come to class prepared with comments and questions on that week's material; I expect there to be lively discussions! Also, as part of your participation grade, you must each do three 'reading responses' at some point in the semester: this means emailing me two short questions/comments on the week's reading before class.
- **Attendance:** I highly discourage you from missing classes, not only because it will affect your participation grade but also because many topics discussed will be presupposed later on. If you have some legitimate reason to miss class, please email me in advance to let me know. I'll be happy to meet outside of class if you need help catching up, and I also plan to make recordings of the classes available.
- **Discussions:** It is everyone's responsibility to maintain a fun and healthy class environment. Speak freely — but listen carefully to what your classmates have to say, do not interrupt and be respectful. Philosophical discussions should be cooperative, not competitive. Don't worry about impressing anyone! If you're not following the discussion, please speak up — the chances are that others will be grateful for some clarification too.
- **Writing:** All writing assignments (homeworks and final paper) must be done completely on your own and turned in via Canvas. Late assignments will be penalised 2.5% per day; assignments over a week late will not be accepted. Exceptions only for documented serious circumstances; technological mistakes are not excuses. Also, don't cheat! Your writing will run through plagiarism software, and penalties can be severe (automatic failing grade, and possibly worse.) You can consult Rutgers' academic integrity policy here: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu>.
- **Office hours:** Please make use of the office hours! I'm there to help you; if there's anything from class discussion you want to clarify – or you have any other questions – come along. If you can't make the time, get in touch and I'll be very happy to schedule an appointment. It is especially a good idea to discuss your ideas with me when it comes to writing your final paper.

Schedule

This is provisional and likely to change; please consult Canvas for the latest version.

Introduction: Philosophy of Mind and the Future of Humanity

1.19// Schneider & Mandik, How Philosophy of Mind Can Shape the Future

I. The Mind-Body Problem

The Ghost in the Machine

1.24// Descartes, Meditations on First Philosophy (II and VI)*;

Gertler, In Defense of Mind-Body Dualism (§§1-5).

[Kripke, Naming and necessity (excerpt)*]

1.26// No class

1.31// Descartes continued.

Zombies

2.2// Chalmers, *The Conscious Mind*, ch.3 sect.1, Arguments 1 & 2; ch.4 sect.1, up to Objections

[Chalmers, Consciousness and its place in nature*; Frankish, The Anti-zombie Argument; Dennett, The unimagined preposterousness of zombies]

2.7// Hill, Imaginability, conceivability, possibility, and the mind-body problem (excerpt)*

[Loar, Phenomenal states*; Nida-Rümelin, Grasping Phenomenal Properties]

2.9// Zombies continued.

The Knowledge Argument

2.14// Nagel, What is it like to be a bat*; Jackson, Epiphenomenal qualia*

[Balog, Conceivability, Possibility, and the Mind-Body Problem, §§3-4; Balog, In Defense of the Phenomenal Concept Strategy; Lewis, What experience teaches; Dennett, What RoboMary Knows]

Week 5: The Explanatory Gap

Levine, Materialism and qualia: The explanatory gap*

[van Gulick, Consciousness (SEP), §5; Papineau, Thinking about Consciousness ch.5]

2.16// Block & Stalnaker, Conceptual analysis, dualism, and the explanatory gap (§§1–9)*
[Chalmers & Jackson, Conceptual Analysis and Reductive Explanation; Schaffer, The Ground Between the Gaps]

Week 6: The Case for Physicalism

2.21// Smart, Sensations and brain processes*

[Lewis, An Argument for the Identity Theory; Place, Is consciousness a brain process?*; Dennett, Quining Qualia*]

2.23// Smullyan, An unfortunate dualist*; Papineau, The Case for Materialism §§1.1-1.5

[Papineau, The Rise of Physicalism; Kim, The many problems of mental causation (excerpt)*; Gertler, In Defense of Mind-Body Dualism §§6-7]

II. Minds and Machines

Week 7: The Imitation Game

2.28// Turing, Computing Machinery and Intelligence (excerpt);

Block, The Mind as the Software of the Brain, §11.1.1

[Dennett, Can Machines Think?]

3.2// Putnam, Brains and behavior*

[Ryle, Descartes' myth*]

Week 8: Functionalism

3.7// Putnam, The Nature of Mental States*

[Fodor, The Mind-Body Problem; Crane, The Mechanical Mind, Intro]

3.9// Lewis, Psychophysical and theoretical identification*;

Lewis, Mad pain and Martian pain.

[Block & Fodor, What Psychological States Are Not]

--- Spring Break ---

Week 9: Is Thinking Purely Mechanical?

3.21// Searle, Can Computers Think?*;

Block, The Mind as the Software of the Brain, §11.6

3.23// Crane, The Mechanical Mind, ch.3 (excerpt)

[Chalmers, The Conscious Mind, ch.9]

Week 10: Is Consciousness Purely Mechanical?

4.4// Block, Troubles with functionalism (excerpt)*

[Schwitzgebel, If materialism is true, the United States is probably conscious;

Shoemaker, Functionalism and qualia; Lycan, Robots and Minds;

Dennett, The Practical Requirements for Making a Conscious Robot]

4.6// Chalmers, The Conscious Mind, ch.7 (excerpt);

Schneider, Can A Robot Feel? (youtube)

[Nida-Rümelin, Pseudonormal vision: An actual case of qualia inversion?*

Shoemaker, The inverted spectrum; Block, The Harder Problem of Consciousness;

McLaughlin, A Naturalist-Phenomenal Realist Response to Block's Harder Problem]

III. Persons

Week 11: Body-swaps

4.11// Locke, The Prince and the Cobbler;

Reid, Of Mr. Locke's Account of Our Personal Identity

[Dennett, Where Am I?, Quinton, The Soul]

4.13// Shoemaker, Excerpt from *Self-Knowledge and Self-Identity*

[Perry, Personal Identity and the Concept of a Person]

Week 12: Are We Animals?

4.18// Olson, Animals

[Noonan, Animalism Versus Lockeanism: A Current Controversy]

4.20// Baker, Constitutionalism vs Animalism

[Thomson, People and Their Bodies; Olson, The Zombies Among Us]]

Week 13: There Is No Self

4.25// The Questions of King Milinda, pp.40-5; Hume, Of Personal Identity

[van Norden, Basics of Buddhist Philosophy (youtube)]

4.27// Parfit, Reductionism and Personal Identity*

[Campbell, The Conception of a Person as a Series of Mental Events;

Lewis, Survival and Identity]

Week 14: Mind Uploading

5.2// Chalmers, Uploading: a Philosophical Analysis

[Corabi & Schneider, If You Upload, Will You Survive?;
Schneider, The Philosophy of 'Her']