PHIL UA-80: Philosophy of Mind

GM Johnson
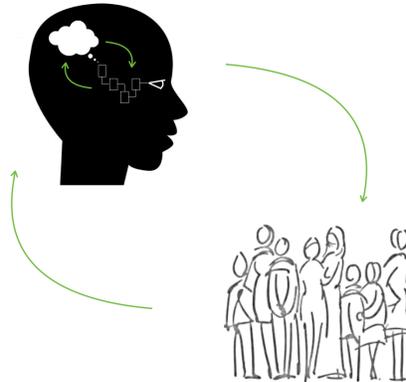
Instructor: Gabbrielle Johnson [Gabby]   **Time:** TR 11:00-12:15pm
Email: gmjohnson@nyu.edu   **Place:** 19 West 4th Street, 102
Office: 5 Washington Place, 510

Course Overview:

This course introduces students to the philosophy of mind. In it, students will explore critical philosophical views concerning the relationship between the mind and the physical world, the nature of consciousness, as well as the mysteries of the unconscious mind.

The course will be divided into four units. In the first unit, we'll start with the most basic questions concerning mental states, namely, **what is a mind and in virtue of what does a being have one**? After broadly surveying and contrasting various philosophical views attempting to answer these questions, we'll home in on two fundamental features of the mind: **consciousness** and **cognition**. The detailed investigation of these two so-called 'marks of the mental' will occupy our second and third units, respectively. Regarding consciousness, we'll explore the mystery of how subjective experience arises from mental processes. Regarding cognition, we'll explore the information processing that allows us to reason about and navigate through the world around us. Finally, in unit four, we'll apply the concepts we've learned to a contemporary question in philosophy of psychology and cognitive science: How, if at all, do humans have objective, value-neutral access to information about the external world? Where we'll take an in-depth look on contemporary empirical work of cases of so-called **cognitive penetration**, **stereotype threat**, and **implicit bias**

The course does not presuppose expertise in any particular field, and it introduces topics from a diverse point of view, pulling materials from philosophy of mind, philosophy of psychology, computer science, vision science, and cognitive science.

Course Materials:

All required and supplementary materials (including readings, quizzes, and writing assignments) will be available through the course website. It is very important to check it regularly for updates.

There is no required textbook for the course. Those looking for an introductory guide to the topics covered in this class are encouraged to check out the following textbooks:

Kim, Jaegwon. *Philosophy of Mind, third edition.* 2011.
Chalmers, David. *Philosophy of Mind: classical and contemporary readings.* 2002.
Crane, Tim. *Elements of mind: an introduction to the philosophy of mind.* 2001.

Course Policies:

Regarding classroom etiquette, the most important policy to keep in mind is to always abide by the **Principle of Charity**. Formally, the principle requires that you interpret a speaker's statements in the most persuasive way possible, so as to render those statements rational and worthy of philosophical engagement. Intuitively, this requires that you give everyone you interact with the benefit of the doubt. A student following the Principle of Charity, for example, would not speak over their fellow student or be outright dismissive of the points they're intending to convey. This applies not only to your fellow students, but also those readings with which we'll be engaging. The primary aim of the principle is ensure a respectful, worthwhile, and collaborative intellectual environment Thus, all students will be expected to always act in ways that further these aims.

Here are some additional course policies, the explanations for which are available on the course website and will be covered on the first day of class:
- No electronics (cell phones, laptops, tablets, etc.) are permitted in class.
- Participation and attendance are mandatory.
- Late writing assignments will be penalized for each day they are late.
- Students are expected to follow section policies put forward by the TA.

Course Requirements:
Final grades will be calculated on the basis of 5 assignment categories:

(1)	daily comprehension quizzes	(10% of your final grade)
(2)	first paper 1-2 pages	(15% of your final grade)
(3)	second paper 3-4 page	(20% of your final grade)
(4)	third paper, 4-6 pages	(25% of your final grade)
(5)	fourth paper, 4-6 pages	(30% of your final grade)

As you can see, this class requires a lot of writing. Philosophy is at its best when students are given the opportunity to engage deeply and critically with a topic—skills you will develop over time and with each assignment. The rising percentage distributions reward progress on these skills.

Daily Quizzes:
Students will be expected to complete daily quizzes (starting with the second class). These quizzes are administered through the course website. There are two each week, and they must be completed before class begins. Each quiz will consist of two multiple choice questions. One question is about the material covered in the previous lecture; you won't be able to answer this question on the reading alone. The other question is about the content of the reading for that day. The purpose of the quiz

questions is to test comprehension; they should be easy so long as you actually did the reading and attended class (provided you paid attention with each).

Written Assignments:
Prompts and details for written assignments will be made available at least one and a half weeks before the assignment is due. All written assignments will be graded anonymously by the TA.

Tentative Schedule:

UNIT ONE: MIND + BODY
Week One
    Tues., Jan. 28: Introduction and Overview of the Philosophical Method
        1) Timothy Crane - *Elements of Mind* Sections 1, 5, and 21

    Thurs., Jan. 30: Skepticism
        1) Descartes - Meditations I

Week Two
    Tues., Feb. 4: Certainty of Mind
        1) Ibn Sina - Floating Man
        2) Descartes - Meditations II

    Thurs., Feb. 6: Mental Causation (1st objection to interactionist dualism)
        1) *Correspondence between Princess Elisabeth and Descartes*
        2) Jaegwon Kim - "Princess Elisabeth Against Descartes"

Week Three
    Tues., Feb. 11: Inconsistent Triad (2nd objection to interactionist dualism)
        1) Tim Crane - "Body"
        2) Peter Carruthers - "The Case for Physicalism"

    Thurs., Feb. 13: Behaviorism and Identity Theory
        1) Carl Hempel - "The Logical Analysis of Psychology"
        2) U.T. Place - "Is Consciousness a Brain Process"
        3) *J.J.C. Smart - "Sensations and Brain Processes"

Week Four
    Tues., Feb. 18: Objections to Behaviorism and Identity Theory
        1) Jerry Fodor - "Something on the State of the Art" (part one)

    Thurs., Feb. 20: Functionalism
        1) Jerry Fodor - "Something on the State of the Art" (part two)
        2) Ned Block - "What is Functionalism?"

Fri., Feb. 21: PAPER ONE DUE

UNIT TWO: CONSCIOUSNESS

Week Five

      Tues., Feb. 25: What is Consciousness?
1) Papineau and Selina - "Introducing Consciousness"
2) David Chalmers - "Facing up to the Problem of Consciousness"

      Thurs., Feb. 27: The Puzzle of Conscious Experience
1) Zoe Drayson - "The Philosophy of Phenomenal Consciousness: An Introduction"
2) Thomas Nagel - "What is it like to be a bat?"
3) *Daniel Dennet - "A visit to the Phenomenological Garden"

Week Six

      Tues., March 3: The Explanatory Gap
1) David Chalmers - "The Puzzle of Conscious Experience"

      Thurs., March 5: The Knowledge Argument
1) Frank Jackson - "Epiphenomenal Qualia"
2) Nagasawa and Stolijar - "Introduction to *There's Something About Mary*"

UNIT THREE: COGNITION

Week Seven

      Tues., March 10: Cognition and Representation
1) Tim Crane - "The Puzzle of Representation"
2) Gabriel Greenberg - "Notes on the Concept of Cognition"

      Thurs., March 12: The Computational Theory of Mind
1) Ian Ravenscroft - "Computational Theory of Mind"
2) Kenneth Craik - "Hypothesis on the Nature of Thought"
3) *Paul Thagard - "Representation and Computation"

Week Eight - Spring Break

Week Nine

      Tues., March 24: Mental Symbols and Mental Algorithms
1) Shimon Edelman - "Computing Minds"
2) *Kevin Lande - "Your Brain Probably is a Computer, Whatever that Means"

      Thurs., March 26: The Problem of Meaning
1) John Searle - "Can Computers Think?"
2) John Searle - "The Systems Reply and the Robot Reply"

Fri. March 27: PAPER TWO DUE

Week Ten
    Tues., March 31: Emergence
        1) Carruthers - "Reduction v. Reductive Explanation"
        2) Marr - "Understanding Complex Information-Processing Systems"

    Thurs., April 2: Externalism
        1) Anderson - "Searle and the Robot Reply"
        2) Palmer - "Visual Perception" pages 4-11 (up to "impossible objects")

UNIT THREE: APPLIED

Week Eleven
    Tues., April 7: What is Philosophy of Psychology?
        1) José Luis Bermúdez - "What is the philosophy of psychology?", *Philosophy of Psychology: a contemporary introduction* (2005)

    Thurs., April 9: What is Perception?
        1) José Luis Bermúdez - "Morgan's Canon and Psychological Explanations" (2007)
        2) Tyler Burge - "Perception: Where the Mind Begins"

Week Twelve
    Tues., April 14: The Puzzle
        1) Russell Hanson - Excerpts from *Patterns of Discovery* pp. 4-20 (1958)
        2) Thomas Kuhn - Excerpts from "Revolutions as Changes of World View", *Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962)
        3) Peter Godfrey-Smith - Excerpts from "The Theory-Ladenness of Observation", *Theory and Reality* (2003)

    Thurs., April 16: First Solution, Modularity and Encapsulation
        1) Jerry Fodor, "Observation Reconsidered" (1984)
        2) Zenon Pylyshyn, "Is vision continuous with Cognition?", (1999)

Week Thirteen
    Tues., April 21: First Solution, Replies
        1) Paul Churchland, "Perceptual Plasticity and Theoretical Neutrality: Reply to Jerry Fodor" (1988)
        2) Jerry Fodor, "A Reply to Churchland's 'Perceptual Plasticity and Theoretical Neutrality'" (1988)

    Thurs., April 23: Top-Down Effects on Perception and The El-Greco Fallacy
        1) Fiona Macpherson - "Cognitive Penetration of Color Experience" (2012)
        2) Chaz Firestone and Brian Scholl - "'Top-Down' Effects Where None Should be Found: the El Greco fallacy in perception research" (2014)

    Fri., April 24: PAPER THREE DUE

Week Fourteen
  Tues., April 28: Implicit Bias, Stereotype Threat, and how biases affect how we think
    1) Jules Holroyd, Robin Scaife, and Tom Stafford, "What is Implicit Bias?" (2017)
    2) Steve Stroessner and Catherine Good, "Stereotype Threat: An Overview"

  Thurs., April 30: Epistemic Costs of Social Bias
    1) Tamar Gendler - "On the epistemic costs of implicit bias" (2011)

Week Fifteen
  Tues., May 5: Beyond the Individual
    1) Alex Madva - "A Plea for Anti-Anti-Individualism: How Oversimple Psychology Misleads Social Policy"

  Thurs., May 7: Wrapping Up
    1) "Machine Bias: There's software used across the country to predict future criminals. And it's biased against blacks", ProPublica (2016)

Fri., May 12: PAPER FOUR DUE

Academic Misconduct:
Students are expected to know and to follow the university's guidelines for academic honesty. Academic misconduct can occur in a variety of ways, including (but not limited to) cheating, fabrication, and plagiarism. When in doubt about whether some academic practice is acceptable, ask your TA or the instructor for assistance. Always err on the side of avoiding misconduct. **Any suspected violation of university policy regarding academic conduct will be reported directly to the Office of the Dean of Students.** (This is a course policy, and it is not subject to revision by your TA.) In other words, **there are no exceptions.**

Academic Accommodation:
Students needing academic accommodations based on a disability should contact the Center for Accessible Education (CAE) [formerly the Office for Students with Disabilities or OSD] at (310)825-1501 or in person at Murphy Hall A255. When possible, students should contact the CAE within the first two weeks of the term as reasonable notice is needed to coordinate accommodations.

University Resources:
For more information, check out the following resources:
• Office of the Dean of Students:
    http://www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu/Academic-Integrity
• Student Conduct Code:
    http://www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu/Portals/16/Documents/UCLACodeOfConduct_Rev030416.pdf
• Student Guide to Academic Integrity:
    https://www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu/portals/16/documents/studentguide.pdf
• UCLA Writing Programs:
    http://wp.ucla.edu/
• Center for Accessible Education (CAE):
    www.cae.ucla.edu