

Philosophy of Mind (MIND)

CTY Course Syllabus

Course Description:

What is the nature of mind? How is the mind related to the brain? What is consciousness? What is pain? How can we be certain that others have minds and conscious experiences? Can a computer have a mind?

In this course, students explore questions such as these as they analyze both historical and contemporary philosophical attempts to explain the mind. Beginning with philosophers such as René Descartes, students investigate traditional dualist attempts to characterize the mind as a non-physical entity existing independently of our bodies. Students then move to an analysis of various versions of materialism, which purport that the mind and mental phenomena are purely physical entities. Among the materialist formulations that students examine are the mind-brain identity thesis, behaviorism, and materialist functionalism. With a foundational understanding of the central philosophical positions on the mind-body problem, students contemplate to what extent animals and machines can be said to possess minds.

As they attempt to shed light on the nature of the mind, students critique primary philosophical works, participate in discussions and debates, and write analytical essays

Course Objectives:

Upon completion of this course, you should:

- be better able to read and interpret sophisticated texts, identify arguments, and analyze and criticize arguments in a thoughtful and reasoned manner
- be familiar with a number of classical and contemporary philosophical positions concerning key issues in the philosophy of mind and the major arguments for and against those positions
- be able to assess these arguments critically and concisely, and be able to extend these skills to other arguments and positions
- Develop your ability to identify, construct, and consider alternatives to familiar views and positions
- be able to express and defend your own positions more clearly and succinctly in both writing and public speaking
- Improve your ability to think creatively and critically

Texts:

Philosophy of Mind, David J. Chalmers (ed.).

Can Animals and Machines Be Persons?, Justin Leiber.

Course Outline

WEEK 1

| | | WHAT (skill goals / knowledge goals / concepts / readings) | HOW (activities) |
|--------------|--|--|---|
| DAY 1 | morning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduction and Course Mechanics - What is Philosophy? What is Philosophy of Mind? - Skepticism | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Liar-Liar Game/Icebreaker - Discussion/Lecture |
| | afternoon | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Logic Basics: Soundness, Validity, and the Anatomy of an argument - Overview of Skepticism and Descartes' Epistemology | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Group Discussion |
| | late afternoon / evening study session (residential sites); homework (day sites) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Read: Descartes, Med 1, 2, 6 & Passions and the Soul (Chalmers, ch 1, 2, and Handout) - Pretest | |
| DAY 2 | morning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Informal Logic: Fallacies and Argument Forms - From Descartes' Epistemology to Philosophy of Mind | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Group Reasoning Activity (Base Rates and Representative Heuristics) - Lecture/Discussion |
| | afternoon | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dualism and the Mind/Body Problem: Overview, Cartesian foundation and Dualistic alternatives to Descartes - Rationalism and Anselm's Ontological Argument | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lecture/Discussion - Individual Activity: Reconstructing the logic of the ontological argument (premise/conclusion form) |
| | late afternoon / evening study session (residential sites); homework (day sites) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Read: Berkeley (Excerpts to be provided) - Hobbes, Chap 1,2,3 & 6 (to be provided) | |
| DAY 3 | morning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dualism: Arguments For and Against - Berkeley's Arguments for Idealism | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Group Debate - Discussion/lecture |
| | afternoon | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Arguments for Idealism Continued - Reading and Writing in Philosophy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Group Discussion - Reading Exercise: Parsing Berkeley's arguments against Materialism |

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|--------------|--|---|---|
| | late afternoon / evening study session (residential sites); homework (day sites) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The relation between materialism and free will - The relation between the Mind/Body problem and the Problem of Personal Identity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Class Discussion - Group Reading and Discussion of Sullmyan, "An Unfortunate Dualist" (Chalmers, ch. 4) |
| DAY 4 | morning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Further problems of Identity: Ship of Theseus - The Problem of Induction, Grue Problems, and the Soul Theory of Personal Identity - Review Concepts, Vocab, Theories, and Distinctions - Hobbes' Materialism | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Group Discussion - Lecture/discussion - Team Trivia Challenge Game - Lecture/Discussion |
| | afternoon | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Behaviorism, Category Mistakes, and Beetles in Boxes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In-Class Individual Reading of Ryle's "Descartes' Myth" (Chalmers, Ch. 5) - Directed Discussion/In-class Group Reading of Passages from Wittgenstein's <i>Philosophical Investigations</i> |
| | late afternoon / evening study session (residential sites); homework (day sites) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Student Concerns/Questions - Read: Putnam, "Brains and Behavior" (Chalmers, 7) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Individual Meetings with Instructor - Individual Reading |
| DAY 5 | morning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Taking Stock: Essay #1- The Mind/Body Problem - Concept Review (Trivia rematch) - Problems with Behaviorism, Interaction Reconsidered, Occasionalism, and the promise of the neuroscience alternative | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Individual Writing Exercise - Team "trivia" Challenge - Group discussion |
| | afternoon | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Video: "Closer to the Truth: Do Brains Cause Minds?" - Intension, Extension, Super Spartans, SuperDuper Spartans, and Meaning and Translatability - Construction and Presentation of Philosophical Positions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Video - Presentation on Putnam's argument - Group Writing and Presentation Project (Selling Ideas) |

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| | late afternoon / evening study session (residential sites); homework (day sites) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Read: UT Place, "Is Consciousness a Brain Process?" (Chalmers, ch 8); Smart, "Sensations and Brain Processes" (ch 9) - Work on Group Project | |

WEEK 2

| | | WHAT (skill goals / knowledge goals / concepts / readings) | HOW (activities) |
|--------------|--|--|---|
| DAY 6 | morning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Thinking About Thinking (TA lecture/activities on reading, notes, and reasoning in philosophy class) - "Selling Ideas" - The Identity Theory | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lecture/Group Activity - Presentations - Lecture/discussion |
| | afternoon | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identity Theory and its Discontents - Researching and Preparing a Formal Argument | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lecture/Discussion - Group Debate Prep |
| | late afternoon / evening study session (residential sites); homework (day sites) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Read: Putnam, "The Nature of Mental States" (Ch 11); Armstrong, "The Causal Theory of the Mind" (Ch 12); Block, "The Troubles with Functionalism" | |
| DAY 7 | morning | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lecture/discussion - Group Debate Prep - Lecture/discussion |
| | afternoon | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Presentation of Positions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Class Debate |
| | late afternoon / evening study session (residential sites); homework (day sites) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Token Materialism and Multiple Realizability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Class Discussion |
| DAY 8 | morning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discussion of Debate: Where is the Mind/Body Problem Now? - Functionalism And the Chinese Room - How to build a Turing Machine | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lecture/discussion - Class Demonstration |

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| | afternoon | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Building and testing Turing Machines - Midpoint Essay - Artificial Intelligence: What is it? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Group project: Turing Machine Competition - Individual Writing - 20 Questions Game and Demonstration |
| | late afternoon / evening study session (residential sites); homework (day sites) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Read: Churchland, "Eliminative Materialism and the Propositional Attitudes" (Ch. 53); Dennett (Ch. 52) | |
| DAY 9 | morning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Taking Stock: The Mind/Body Problem after Computers and Neuroscience | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Group Discussion - Video |
| | afternoon | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Theories of Personhood Considered | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lecture/Discussion - Group Discussion |
| | late afternoon / evening study session (residential sites); homework (day sites) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Read: Lieber | |
| DAY 10 | morning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - TUTORIAL: Readings and presentation on articles challenging students' own essays on Mind/Body problem | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Individual assigned readings (to be handed out) - Group/pair presentations |
| | afternoon | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Concept review - Reductionism: defining different versions - Group reading of Lieber (Afternoon Passage) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hollywood squares game - Discussion/lecture - Class reading |
| | late afternoon / evening study session (residential sites); homework (day sites) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Read: Parfit (60); Broad (16) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Individual reading |

WEEK 3

| | | WHAT (skill goals / knowledge goals / concepts / readings) | HOW (activities) |
|---------------|--|--|--|
| DAY 11 | morning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Week 3 Review – Taking Stock - The Problem of Personal Identity - Parfit & Perry on Identity - How to Write a Philosophy Paper - Research Prep | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Group Discussion - Lecture/Discussion - Writing Tutorial - Group writing exercise |
| | afternoon | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rethinking Identity - Research | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Class discussion - Individual Writing |
| | late afternoon / evening study session (residential sites); homework (day sites) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Paper Topic Proposal Workshop/presentation - Read: Descartes, <i>Discourse on Meth</i> (5) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Group Projects/presentations - Individual Reading |
| DAY 12 | morning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Descartes/Animal Consciousness Discussion - Group reading/discussion: Chomsky vs. Skinner - Video: <i>Monkey in the Mirror</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Group Discussion - Reading/Discussion - Video |
| | afternoon | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Research Papers - Group Debate: Animal Consciousness? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Individual Writing - Group Debate Project |
| | late afternoon / evening study session (residential sites); homework (day sites) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Read: McGinn: "Can We Solve the Mind Body Problem?" (39) - Research Paper | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Individual Reading - Individual Writing |
| DAY 13 | morning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Kant and Transcendental Idealism - Cognitive Closure and M/B Problem - Individual Research Projects | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Class Discussion - Writing Exercise |
| | afternoon | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Video: "Interview with Patricia Churchland" - Internalism/Externalism - Research Presentation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Video - Discussion/lecture - Individual presentations |
| | late afternoon / evening study session (residential sites); homework (day sites) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Read: Sachs, "The Man Who Mistook his Wife for a Hat" & "I am John's Brain" (to be distributed) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Individual Reading |

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| DAY 14 | morning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Mind Games": Prediction, ESP, Mindreading, and Science - Read and Critique Examples of philosophy papers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discussion - Group work |
| | afternoon | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Materialism, Science, and Knowledge - Video: 2001 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discussion - Video |
| | late afternoon / evening study session (residential sites); homework (day sites) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Finish Research Project/Present | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Individual/group Work |
| DAY 15 | morning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Post-Test - Closing thoughts/unfinished business - Party - Video: 2001 | |