

## PHILOSOPHY OF MIND



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### Course description

This course explores a variety of questions about the mind, that we can divide in three groups: i) Traditional questions related to the nature of the mind that philosophers have been exploring for centuries; ii) Relatively new questions that philosophers began exploring

a few decades ago; iii) Finally, questions on the cutting-edge of research about the mind that researchers are currently exploring.

Examples of questions in each group:

i) Is the mind physical? How do mind and body relate to each other? Are mental states brain states? Can science explain consciousness? What type of thing is the self?

ii) Does the mind end at the limits of the head? Can neuroscience tell us everything we need to know about the mind? What is it like to have a “what it is like” mental state? How many kinds of minds are there? Do non-human animals have minds? What about plants? How intelligent can artificial intelligence get? Can robots be conscious?

iii) Do we have control over our implicit attitudes? Can philosophy contribute to happiness or rather to getting depressed? Can brain-reading techniques developed by neuroscientists tell us more about our minds than ourselves?

### **Catalog description**

Rival theories of the nature of the mind and mental activity, including dualism, materialism, functionalism. Difficulties in achieving a theoretical understanding of familiar psychological concepts such as belief, sensation, emotion, intention.

Prerequisite: 3 units in philosophy or instructor permission. Units: 3.0

### **Course outcomes**

You will

- Develop critical reading, listening, and writing skills.
- Learn about different approaches to the mind, and about a selection of questions related to the mental.
- Begin developing your own philosophically informed views about the mind and how it relates to other parts of the world.
- Develop an understanding of several philosophical theories.
- Learn to apply philosophical theories to everyday questions.

**Evaluation:** Your total number of points is calculated by adding the weighted points earned on the following assessment items:

<b>Assessment</b>	<b>Details</b>	<b>Due date</b>	<b>Points (out of 100)</b>
Questions on assigned material	200 words max. See instructions below.	by midnight the day the relevant block ends	16
(Surprise) Quizzes (x3)	Quiz #1: 9 points Quiz #2: 7 points Quiz #3: 6 points	Surprise	22

Writing Assignments (WA) (x7)	200-400 words; 4 points each	by midnight the day indicated on the schedule	28
Handout	Flexible format; in class		5
Group presentation	15 mins. max.		10
Active attendance / in- class assignments (x6)	3 points each	Surprise	18

### Description of assessment items

**Question on assigned material:** You are expected to submit questions on the assigned material, one per week. You can make a question on a single reading, or one that relates two or more readings/ media resources in the same week. You must submit your questions to the Canvas course site. I will grade one question per block. There are four blocks, that means I'll grade four of your questions (4 points each). In order to secure a good grade, you need to submit questions of consistently high quality. I will provide sample questions in class. **IMPORTANT:** The question will be selected randomly. I will randomly select one day, the same for everyone, and grade your question for that session. If there is no submission on the selected day, you will get 0 points for that block.

Questions are evaluated as follows:

0: there is no question or the question is irrelevant.

1: the question is related to the readings but it doesn't engage with the arguments; it shows misunderstanding of the reading.

2: the question is related to the readings, shows some understanding of the arguments but it deviates from the main ideas of the readings (e.g. it focuses on a marginal point, or it's tangential).

3: the question engages with the argument; shows understanding of the material; points out the merits of the argument(s) or idea(s).

4: the question engages with the argument; shows understanding of the material; points out a problem with the argument, or proposes a counterexample, or suggest a future line of inquiry, or proposes an application of the argument(s) or main idea(s) to other domains or cases, or relates it to some other material discussed in class in an appropriate way.

**(Surprise) Quizzes:** Quizzes contain multiple-choice questions. There is no established schedule for the quizzes, they could happen any day. There will be no make-up options (see "late submissions policy"). If you miss a class or arrive to class by the time the quiz is over, you do not earn any points. There are three quizzes during the semester.

**Writing assignments:** These are written exercises that you will do at home and submit through Canvas on their due date. In order to do well on these exercises, you need to

understand the readings and the material discussed in class during the preceding sessions. Pay attention to the schedule and make sure you do not miss the deadlines. There will be no make-ups (see the late submission policy below). There are 7 written assignments, worth 4 points max. each.

**Handout:** You are expected to select a reading and develop a handout for it. The handout must summarize the argument of the reading. Format: it can be regular structured prose (up to one two-sided page), a mental map, a comic strip, a song (up to 2 mins), an animation (up to 2 mins), a collage ... be creative! (samples of handouts will be made available).

**Group presentation:** The class will be divided in groups of three, and each group will prepare a presentation. Groups will present at the end of the semester. See “resources” for instructions and rubric.

**In-class assignments:** You do not learn and come to understand complex arguments simply by passively soaking up what happens around you in the classroom. In order to learn, you need to take an active role in processing the course material. To help you stay active during the class, we’ll do in-class assignments. There are 6 of those, worth 3 points each. They can happen any day. If you miss one of these assignments because you missed class that day, you earn no points. There are no make-ups.

**Participation in class:** You don’t get points for attending class. You get something better: the tools you need to do well in this course. If you think you can do well in this course by working alone at home, without participating in class, please consider the following: Respectful and constructive discussion is a critical part to learning and becoming a good thinker. The pathway to good ideas and well-formed arguments is usually not a lonely one, but one filled with contributions and insights from others, sometimes in the form of challenges and questions, sometimes in the form of suggestions or comments. It is important to keep in mind that in this course, and in many others, you can learn not only from the texts and from me, but also from your classmates. Class discussions are a good opportunity to learn from classmates and to practice your own argumentative skills. It is also a way to initiate collaborative projects.

## **Evaluation**

General guidelines:

**Knowledge:** your work needs to demonstrate correct interpretations of class material, distinguish among the different perspectives we discuss, and identify relevant notions.

**Critical thinking:** your work needs to demonstrate an ability to articulate and evaluate ideas, whether or not you agree with them.

**Communication:** your work needs to demonstrate the ability to transmit ideas in a way that is sensitive to your expected audience.

**Etiquette:** respectful and constructive discussion is a critical part to learning and becoming a good thinker.

**Engagement** according to academic parameters: your work needs to demonstrate that the subject matter has been adequately researched and correctly cited.

**Creativity:** your work needs to demonstrate innovative approaches to the subject matter being discussed or presented. This can be done by connecting the subject matter to domains and questions you are familiar with.

Specific rubrics for assignments will be made available on SacCT.

**Grading:** Your final grade is determined by how many points you earn out of 100, with these grade floors: 93%=A, 90%=A-, 87%=B+, 83%=B, 80%=B-, 77%=C+, 73%=C, 70%=C-, 67%=D+, 63%=D, 60%=D- (and F = all scores less than 60%). Definition of Grade Symbols:  
<http://catalog.csus.edu/12-14/first%20100%20pages/academicpolicies.html>

**Anonymous grading:** In order to guarantee impartial grading, I intend to grade as much work as possible anonymously. I need you to help me with that. Instead of your name, indicate your ID#.

### **Other Important Information**

**I am here to help:** Remember that I am here to help you learn as best as I can. Please utilize my office hours for additional feedback and guidance on course-related issues.

**Attendance:** Attending class is expected. There will be in-class assignments and you will not be excused due to absence. Any student who misses 2 or more classes in the first 2 weeks may be administratively dropped to make room for students on the waitlist.

**Classroom behavior:** The classroom should be a safe space to discuss any topic, no matter how controversial. We all have to build and maintain that safety by discussing respectfully, avoiding personal attacks, offensive epithets, contemptuous gestures and exclusive language. Any student who feels uncomfortable in class is encouraged to get in contact with me.

**Use of electronic devices in class:** Electronic devices, such as laptops, tablets, phones, and Google Glasses, are in general not allowed in class.

Important exceptions to this rule:

- You will need your favorite internet-connected electronic device to complete the quizzes.
- If you access class material on your phone, tablet or laptop, you are allowed to bring it to class and use it during class discussions.

**Writing:** Writing is a critical part of this course, and of philosophy in general. Come talk to me if you want resources and/or need extra advice on writing.

**Gender neutral writing:** In philosophy, gender-neutral writing is the accepted practice recommended by the American Philosophical Association. See the American Philosophical Association guidelines [www.apaonlinecsw.org/apa-guidelines-for-non-sexist-use-of-language](http://www.apaonlinecsw.org/apa-guidelines-for-non-sexist-use-of-language).

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarizing someone else's work is a serious academic offence, and it is bad for many reasons. Always use quotation marks and a footnote citation to indicate sentences or passages you borrow from another author. Assignments in which plagiarism is found will at the least be graded at 0 (not just an F). All incidents of plagiarism will be reported both to the Department Chair and to the Judicial Officer in the Office of Student Affairs for possible further administrative sanction. You are responsible for reading and understanding the details of the University's plagiarism policy. All papers will be put through plagiarism software. See the current student handbook for further information on student rights and responsibilities. Here is a link to the university's honesty policy: <http://www.csus.edu/umannual/student/stu-0100.htm> Come talk to me if you are not sure about what constitutes plagiarism.

**Disability access statement:** If you have a verified need for an academic accommodation or materials in alternate media (i.e.: Braille, large print, electronic text, etc.) per the Americans with Disabilities Act or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, please contact me as soon as possible to arrange accommodations. It is your responsibility to provide documentation of disability to SSWD and meet with a SSWD counselor to request special accommodation before classes start. SSWD is located in Lassen Hall 1008 and can be contacted by phone at (916) 278-6955 (Voice); (916) 278-7239 (TDD only); or via email at [sswd@csus.edu](mailto:sswd@csus.edu). More information available here: <http://www.csus.edu/sswd/index.html>

**If you miss a class...** Please do not email me with the question "Did I miss anything important?" It is your responsibility to ask your classmates about the class you missed and take any other steps necessary to keep up with the course content. You won't be excused of any of the required exercises for the reason "I didn't know".

Also, read this poem: <http://www.loc.gov/poetry/180/013.html>

### **Email policy:**

I commit to respond to your emails within 2 business days. Please take into account that I don't check my email unless I'm working on my computer, so do not expect quick responses. If you haven't heard from me after 2 business days, please send me a follow-up email. Before emailing me with a question about the course, check the syllabus in case your question is already answered there. To facilitate communication, include your name and last name in the body of your email, and include the title of the course you are taking in your email's subject. The Philosophy Department has some advice on how to correspond with your

professors. I encourage you to take a look at it: <http://www.csus.edu/phil/guidance/how-to-correspond.html>

**Late submissions and missed exercises:**

Accommodations will only be made under exceptional circumstances, such as a documented medical or family emergency (you need to contact me as soon as you can after the emergency and before the due date; extensions will usually not be given on or after the due date). Late assignments turned in within 24 hours of the due day will be docked 10% (e.g., A- 90% becomes B- 80%). Later assignments (i.e. after 24 hours) will be docked 40%.

Please be aware that this course includes many in-class activities, and there are no make ups for these activities. Missing any of them due to absence will result (unless it is an exceptional circumstance as mentioned above) in losing the points allocated to that assignment.

**Required Materials:** There is no textbook required for this course. Required readings and media materials (noted on the schedule) will be made available on the course website.

**Technology requirements:** Students must have a reliable way of accessing internet, Canvas and their Sac State-registered email. Technical problems must be directed to the ITC Help Line @ 278-7337 or [servicedesk@csus.edu](mailto:servicedesk@csus.edu)

**Office hours:** I strongly recommend that you come to my office hours at least once during the semester.

**Basic needs support:** If you are experiencing challenges in the area of food and/or stable housing, help is just a click, email or phone call away! Sacramento State offers basic needs support for students who are experiencing challenges in these areas. Please visit our Basic Needs website to learn more about your options and resources available.

<https://www.csus.edu/basicneeds/>

**Schedule:** Important note: The schedule is subject to change. If the schedule changes, I will alert students with an announcement on Canvas.

Bloc k	Wee k	Sess ion	Da y	Date	Topic	Materials for the day	Assignments deadlines
	0	1	M	Aug 26	Syllabus overview		
		2	W	Aug 28	Intro: The physical and The Mental	Louise Antony I pp. 555-556 + Anne M. Edwards Ch. 1&2	
	1		M	Sept 2	Labor day - no class		
		3	W	Sept 4	René Descartes and The Deceiving Demon	René Descartes (Meditation I)	

1						+ Anne M. Edwards Ch. 3		
	2	4	M	Sept 9	Teresa of Ávila and The Deceiving Demon	Christia Mercer	WA #1	
		5	W	Sept 11	René Descartes, Elisabeth of Bohemia and The Mind-Body Problem I	René Descartes (Meditation II)		
	3	6	M	Sept 16	René Descartes, Elisabeth of Bohemia and The Mind-Body Problem II	Elisabeth of Bohemia	WA #2	
		7	W	Sept 18	Dualism, Behaviorism & Identity Theory	Paul Churchland + Jaegwon Kim + Suilin Lavelle	WA #3	
	4	8	M	Sept 23	Functionalism	Andy Clark Ch. 1 + Louise Antony II		
		9	W	Sept 25	Functionalism & Reductionism	Patricia Churchland + Peggy Series & Mark Sprevak (excerpt)		
	2	5	10	M	Sept 30	Consciousness I	Thomas Nagel + Caspar Hare	WA #4
			11	W	Oct 2	Consciousness II	Susan Blackmore Ch. 2 + Daniel Dennett + Louise Antony III	
		6	12	M	Oct 7	Self I: Ego or Bundle?	Susan Blackmore Ch. 7 (excerpt) + Derek Parfit (excerpt)	
13			W	Oct 9	Self II: Self or No Self?	Monima Chadha + Alison Gopnik		

7	14	M	Oct 14	Self III: Is the self socially constituted?	John Doris (excerpt)		
	15	W	Oct 16	Evolution of The Mind	Suilin Lavelle & Kenny Smith + Bertran Malle + Laurie Santos		
3	8	16	M	Oct 21	Alien Minds I: Non-Human Animal Minds	Alison Gopnik + Kristin Andrews	
		17	W	Oct 23	Alien Minds II: Extended Minds	Katalin Farkas + David Chalmers (video) + Andy Clark (video)	WA #5
	9	18	M	Oct 28	Alien Minds III: Plant Minds	Paco Calvo + Stefano Mancuso	
		19	W	Oct 30	Alien Minds IV: Artificial Intelligence & the Singularity Hypothesis	Joseph Corabi & Susan Schneider + David Chalmers (excerpt)	
	10	20	M	Nov 4	Alien Minds V: Artificial Consciousness Guest lecture by Dr. McCormick	Stanislas Dehaene, Hakwan Lau & Sid Kouider	WA #6
		21	W	Nov 6	Alien Minds VI: Software Immortality?	Diane Proudfoot + response to Proudfoot	
			M	Nov 11	Veterans' day - no class		
4	11	22	W	Nov 13	Implicit Bias I	Jules Holroyd	
		23	M	Nov 18	Implicit bias II	TBD	WA #7
	12	24	W	Nov 20	Brain-reading	Frédérique De Vignemont	Handout
		25	M	Nov 25	Philosophy & Depression	Jennifer Mundale	

	26	W	Nov 27	Group presentations I		Group presentations
	27	M	Dec 2	Group presentations II		Group presentations
	28			Group presentations III or special topic		Group presentations
		W	Dec 4			