

## **PHILOSOPHY OF MIND (PH 4710)**

**Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology**

### **MEETING INFORMATION**

Room: 18

Tuesdays: 8.10 to 11.00

Instructor: Marga Vega, email: [mvega@dspt.edu](mailto:mvega@dspt.edu)

Office hours: By appointment.

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

How can the mind, supposedly an immaterial entity, have any causal influence in the body which is material? How is intentionality, the capacity of our mind to have contents about the world, possible? These questions posed by Descartes and others are part of one of the most discussed disciplines in contemporary Philosophy: The Philosophy of Mind. This course reviews the main problems in the Philosophy of Mind focusing mainly in the mind-body problem and the relation between intentionality and consciousness. We will study the main theories that try to account for the mind-body problem (dualism, behaviorism, identity theory, functionalism, eliminativism, anomalous monism, supervenience, biological naturalism). We will study the difficulties as well as advantages that each one of these theories presents. Counterarguments to reductive materialism will be presented as well as the difficulties entailed by the dualist approach. We will turn to the History of Philosophy, more specifically to Aristotle, to present a non-dualist, non-reductionist model for the mind-body problem.

### **COURSE FORMAT**

This course is a seminar. In the first period of our weekly meeting we will study a prominent theory of the mind and objections and replies. In the second period we will focus in one of the main contemporary questions in the Philosophy of Mind where the students will take turns presenting the topics assigned.

### **COURSE GOALS**

Following DSPT institutional goals of deep learning (integrative thinking, intellectual humility and self-direction) and of effective leadership, in this course the student will have an opportunity to:

1. Acquire systematic knowledge of the main problems in the Philosophy of Mind. The instructor's lectures will present the main approaches to the problems of the mind in the discipline.

2. Become familiar with some milestone texts on the Philosophy of Mind. Every week the student will read some of the most representative papers on the different theories of the mind.
3. Develop critical thought on the problems of the Philosophy of Mind presented. The student is encouraged to participate in class and engage in philosophical conversation.
4. Expand the scope of the problems dealt with by the discipline, bringing together different traditions that may shed a new light on the topics discussed. The instructor will provide an integrative approach to the topic by contrasting contemporary current approaches with different paradigms in the history of philosophy.
5. Improve argumentative skills in Philosophy. The student will participate in active discussion.

## COURSE OUTCOMES

By the end of the semester the student will be able to:

1. Present the main points of both dualist and materialist theories of the mind as well as the main objections that these theories face.
2. Articulate the main problems that the Philosophy of Mind studies.
3. Elaborate a personal reflection on the possible solution to these problems.
4. Show proficiency in the academic literature on the topic.

## ASSIGNMENTS

- **Annotated bibliography:** Each student will submit a bibliography of five sources, accompanied by your own précis of each entry (100-250 words). The bibliography will cover the five most important essays related to your topic of interest, ideally related to your thesis topic in connection with our metaphysics class. If the student does not have a thesis topic by the time the bibliography is due, she may use the exercise to explore possible thesis topics. The student will need to use the philosopher's index to complete this exercise. She will be graded on the quality of the annotations, and the significance of the selections.
- **Presentations:** Each week students will take turns presenting the assigned reading. This presentation should focus on synthesizing the reading assigned for the day. The thesis, key distinctions, and basic examples or arguments of the assigned reading should be stated. The student will submit a summary of the assigned reading of no more than two pages. The summary should state the problem the reading addresses. The grade will be based on the clarity, organization, focus and brevity of the presentation, and on the organization and focus and coherence of the summary or outline.
- **Online Journals:** The student is expected to submit one journal entry per week, through Moodle. The entries should be between 200 and 500 words. This entry should reflect some critical engagement with the reading assigned for the week. You should raise questions, concerns, criticisms, or simply point to passages, distinctions or arguments that you do not understand. These entries will form the basis for our discussion sections. Students must submit their entries before our class. The student will be graded on the quality and quantity of entries. Late entries will not receive full credit.

- The grade for the course will be: 25% for presentations, 25% for outlines/summaries, 25% for online journals, 25% for annotated bibliography.

## READINGS

- Brian P. McLaughlin and Jonathan Cohen, *Contemporary Debates in Philosophy of Mind*, Blackwell, 2007. ASIN: B001DX8UU0. [Amazon kindle edition: \\$ 44.76](#)
- Other assigned readings and handouts can be found at the course website on Moodle. Students will need the key to access the course website. The instructor will provide during the first meeting.
- Recommended readings, though not mandatory, especially if the student wants to acquire a background knowledge of the subject are:
  - Edward Feser. *Philosophy of Mind*. One World Publications. 2006. ISBN-13: 978-1851684786. 11.45 \$
  - John Searle. *Mind: A Brief Introduction*. Oxford. 2005. ISBN-13: 978-0195157345. 20 \$. 8\$ Kindle version.

## SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

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**September 10<sup>th</sup>**

### **PROBLEMS IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF MIND/DUALISM**

#### **Readings:**

- Descartes, Rene. *Meditations on First Philosophy*. II and VI
- Descartes, Rene. *Meditations on First Philosophy*. Meditation VI

**NO PRESENTATIONS**

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**September 17<sup>th</sup>**

### **BEHAVIORISM/PUTNAM: MINDS, BRAINS AND BEHAVIOR**

#### **Readings:**

- Putnam, Hilary. 1975 (1963). "Brains and Behavior." *Mind, Language, and Reality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 325–341.
- Hempel, Carl. 1949. "The Logical Analysis of Psychology." *Readings in Philosophical Analysis*, edited by H. Feigl and W. Sellars, 373-84. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts.

**NO PRESENTATIONS**

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September 24<sup>th</sup>

**IDENTITY THEORY/KRIPKE**

**READINGS AND PRESENTATIONS: Should Physicalists Be A Priori Physicalists?**

- Frank Jackson, “A Priori Physicalism.” In *Contemporary Debates in the Philosophy of Mind*.
- Armstrong, David. 1980. “The Nature of the Mind.” *The Nature of the Mind and Other Essays*. University of Queensland Press.
- Kripke, Samuel. 1980. *Naming and Necessity*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

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October 1<sup>st</sup>

**FUNCTIONALISM/CHINESE ROOM**

**READINGS AND PRESENTATIONS:**

- Searle, John R. 1980. “Minds, brains, and programs.” *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 3 (3): 417-457.
- Putnam, Hilary. 1975 (1967). “The Nature of Mental States.” *Mind, Language, and Reality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 429–440.
- Searle, John R. “How Artificial Intelligence Fails,” in *Philosophy in a New Century*.

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October 8<sup>th</sup>

**ELIMINATIVISM/NAGEL**

**READINGS AND PRESENTATIONS: Is Non-Reductive Materialism Viable?**

- Louise Antony. “Everybody Has Got It: A Defense of Non-Reductive Materialism.” In *Contemporary Debates in the Philosophy of Mind*.
- Paul M. Churchland. “The Evolving Fortunes of Eliminative Materialism.” In *Contemporary Debates in the Philosophy of Mind*.
- Churchland, Paul M. 1981. “Eliminative Materialism and the Propositional Attitudes.” *The Journal of Philosophy* 78, No. 2 (Feb.): 67-90.
- Nagel, Thomas. 1974. “What Is It Like To Be a Bat?” *Philosophical Review* 83: 435–450.

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October 15<sup>th</sup>

**ANOMALOUS MONISM/WHAT MARY DIDN'T KNOW**

**READINGS AND PRESENTATIONS: Is Consciousness Ontologically Emergent from the Physical?**

- Martine Nida-Rümelin, “Dualist Emergentism.” In *Contemporary Debates in the Philosophy of Mind*.

- David Braddon-Mitchell, “Against Ontologically Emergent Consciousness.” In *Contemporary Debates in the Philosophy of Mind*.
  - Jackson, Frank. 1986. “What Mary Didn't Know.” *Journal of Philosophy* 83: 291–295.
  - Davidson, Donald. 1980 (1970). “Mental Events”. *Essays on Actions and Events*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
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October 22<sup>th</sup>

### **EPIPHENOMENALISM/ZOMBIES**

#### **READINGS AND PRESENTATIONS: Is There an Unresolved Problem of Mental Causation?**

- Jaegwon Kim, “Causation and Mental Causation.” In *Contemporary Debates in the Philosophy of Mind*.
  - Barry Loewer, “Mental Causation, or Something Near Enough.” In *Contemporary Debates in the Philosophy of Mind*.
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November 12<sup>th</sup>

### **BIOLOGICAL NATURALISM/ARISTOTLE**

#### **READINGS AND PRESENTATIONS:**

- Searle, John R. 2002. “Why I Am Not a Property Dualist”
  - David S. Odeberg, “Hylemorphic Dualism”
  - Jaegwon Kim, “Mental Causation in Searle’s ‘Biological Naturalism’.” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 55.1 (Mar 1995): 189-194.
  - M. Vega, “Biological Naturalism: Overdetermination or Causal Multi-Tasking? Some Insights from Aristotle”
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November 19<sup>th</sup>

### **INTENTIONALITY**

#### **READINGS AND PRESENTATIONS: Is Awareness of Our Own Mental Acts a Kind of Perceptual Consciousness?**

- Searle, John R. 1979. “What is an Intentional State.” *Mind* 88, No. 349 (Jan.): 74-92.
- M. Vega. “What Is the Mark of the Mental: Polo’s Retrieval of Aristotle’s *Energeia*”
- Jesse Prinz, “All Consciousness is Perceptual.” In *Contemporary Debates in the Philosophy of Mind*.
- Christopher Peacocke, “Mental Action and Self-Awareness.” In *Contemporary Debates in the Philosophy of Mind*.

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**December 3<sup>rd</sup>**

**NETWORK, BACKGROUND AND THE UNCONSCIOUS**

**READINGS AND PRESENTATIONS:**

- Searle, John R. 1992. *The Rediscovery of the Mind*, chapter 7 and 9, Boston: MIT Press.
- Searle, John, R. 1995. "Consciousness, the Brain and the Connection Principle." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 55, No. 1 (Mar): 217-232.
- Stroud, Barry. 1991. "The Background of Thought." *John Searle and his critics*. Blackwell.

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**December 10<sup>th</sup>**

**FREE WILL**

**READINGS AND PRESENTATIONS:**

- J.R. Searle. 2001. "Freedom of the Will as a Problem in Neurobiology".
- J. Kihlstrom. 2013. "Threats to Reason in Moral Judgment".
- Jing Zhu, "Reclaiming Volition. An Alternative Interpretation of Libet's Experiment"

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**Review**