

MIND AND BRAIN (PH 4711-01)
Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology

MEETING INFORMATION

Room: TBA
Tuesdays: 8.10-9.30
Instructors: Marga Vega, email: mvega@dspt.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

How can the mind, supposedly an immaterial entity, have any causal influence in the body which is material? As physicalism tries to present an exhaustive explanation of the world, and neuroscience progresses slowly mapping the brain, it seems that the way to find out who we are, what are we capable of, and how we should behave in the world, is contained in the three pounds of gray matter inside our skull. We will philosophically examine these assumptions and learn from the research carried by neuroscientists and from philosophical argumentation. Consequently, this course combines classic arguments from the Philosophy of Mind on the possibility of reducing the mind to the brain, with the information provided by the sciences that study the brain.

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 review the difficulties as well as advantages that each one of these theories presents. 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. We will also study intentionality and its relation to consciousness, and to the unconscious. Lastly, we will briefly review two standard problems in the relation between mind and brain: Personal Identity and Free Will.

COURSE FORMAT

This course is a hybrid seminar. In the online portion of the course, the student will follow a Power Point presentation on the assigned topic. The lesson will conclude with an assigned reading. These quizzes will not be graded but will help to review the material learnt. There will also be a weekly meeting where we will have discussion and presentations on the readings assigned.

COURSE GOALS

Following DSPT institutional goals of deep learning (integrative thinking, intellectual humility and self-direction) and of effective leadership, 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 in the relation between mind and brain.
2. Develop critical thought on the problems presented. The student is encouraged to participate in class and engage in philosophical conversation.
3. 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.
4. Improve argumentative skills in Philosophy through class participation and assignments.

COURSE OUTCOMES

In relation to the course contents by the end of the semester the student will be able to:

1. Articulate the main problems that arise from understanding the relation between the mind and the brain.
2. Present the main points of dualist and materialist theories of the mind, as well as the main objections that these theories face.
3. Understand the arguments against different versions of materialism like the ones presented by Kripke (Modal Argument), Leibniz's Law, Nagel (What is it like to be a bat), Putnam's supervenience (against behaviorism), Searle (Chinese Room against functionalism), and Jackson (What Mary didn't know), among others.
4. Articulate the difficulties brought about by epiphenomenalism and emergentism.
5. Compare and uncover the metaphysical assumptions that underlie different conceptions on the mind and causation.
6. Present non-reductive philosophical approaches that can deal with the richness of mental life, its qualitative and conscious aspects, its intentionality, and its irreducibility to physical processes.
7. Understand mental phenomena like intentionality and other issues associated with intentionality: the relation between consciousness and intentionality, the role of the unconscious.
8. Relate presuppositions on the relation between the mind and the brain with anthropological and ethical problems, for example, assessing Libet's experiments on the nature of free will or the question of personal identity.

In relation to the student Academic skills the main learning objectives are:

1. To develop analytical skills orally, in research and writing. The student will take turns presenting reading assignments. S/he will also analyze critically current research on the topic through an annotated bibliography.
2. To acquire research skills. The student will learn about the bibliography and authors related to the main topics of the course, s/he will become familiar with bibliography data bases like *The Philosophers Index*, and other research resources.

3. To share insights with others through class participation, presentations and journal submissions.
4. To think critically on the possible solution to these problems.
5. To show proficiency in the academic literature on the topic.

ASSIGNMENTS

- **Midterm:** On October 30th.
- **Presentations:** Each week students will take turns presenting the assigned reading and leading the discussion. This presentation should lead to the active participation by all the students on the topic studied that week.
- **Final Exam:** On December 11th.
- The grade for the course will be: 25% for presentations, 25% for annotated bibliography, 50% for final exam.

READINGS

- The assigned readings can be found at the end of each online lecture except for the following book: Mele, Alfred. 2012. [Why Science Hasn't Disproved Free Will](#). Oxford University Press. Kindle Edition: 8.76 \$. Hardcover: 12.46 \$. ISBN-10: 0199371628
- The online lectures can be accessed through Dropbox.
- If the student wants to acquire a background knowledge of the subject, these are some recommended readings (though not mandatory):
 - Bennett, M.R and P.M.S. Hacker. *Philosophical Foundations of Neuroscience*. Wiley-Blackwell. 2003. ISBN: 978-1-4051-0838-6.
 - Feser, E. *Philosophy of Mind*. One World Publications. 2006. ISBN-13: 978-1851684786. 11.45 \$
 - Koch, C. *The Quest for Consciousness: A Neurobiological Approach*. Englewood, CO: Roberts and Company, 2004.
 - McLaughlin Brian P. and Jonathan Cohen, *Contemporary Debates in Philosophy of Mind*, Blackwell, 2007. ASIN: B001DX8UU0. [Amazon kindle edition: \\$ 44.76](#)
 - Searle, J. *Mind: A Brief Introduction*. Oxford. 2005. ISBN-13: 978-0195157345. 20 \$. 8\$ Kindle version.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

SEP 4th – WEEK 0

THE MIND AS A PROBLEM IN THE PHYSICALIST WORLDVIEW

- **Reading:** Start on readings and lecture for next week.
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SEP 11th – WEEK 1

SUBSTANCE DUALISM AND IDEALISM

- **Reading:** “Dualism”, Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (SEP).
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SEP 18th – WEEK 2

REDUCING THE MIND TO THE BRAIN: REDUCTIVE AND ELIMINATIVE PHYSICALISM.

- Behaviorism. Identity Theory. Eliminativism. Anomalous monism. Against physicalism: Kripke’s modal argument.
 - **Reading:** Behaviorism, in the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy (IEP), Identity Theory (IEP)
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SEP 25th – WEEK 3

REDUCING THE MIND TO THE BRAIN: NON-REDUCTIVE PHYSICALISM

- Functionalism and Computer Functionalism. Objections: 1. Semantics (Chinese Room); 2. Qualia: What is it like to be a bat, Zombies, Chinese Nation, Disembodiment, What Mary Didn’t Know, Inverted Qualia.
 - **Readings:**
 - “Functionalism” (IEP).
 - Searle, John R. 1980. “Minds, brains, and programs.” *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 3 (3): 417-457.
 - Searle, John R. “How Artificial Intelligence Fails.” *Philosophy in a New Century*.
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OCT 2nd – WEEK 4

THE IRREDUCIBILITY OF THE MIND TO THE BRAIN: DUAL ATTRIBUTE THEORIES: EPIPHENOMENALISM AND EMERGENTISM, PANPSYCHISM

- **Readings:** Epiphenomenalism (IEP), Emergentism (IEP)
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OCT 9th – WEEK 5

BIOLOGICAL NATURALISM, NEUTRAL MONISM, AND MIND-BODY PESIMISM

- **Readings:**
 - Searle, J.R. 2005. "Biological Naturalism", from *Mind*.
 - Searle, J.R. 2002. "Why I Am Not a Property Dualist" *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 9/12: 57-64
 - Concoran, K. 2001. "The Troubles with Searle's Biological Naturalism" *Erkenntnis* 55: 307-324.
 - Optional: Kallestrup, K. 2006. 'The Causal Exclusion Argument', *Philosophical Studies* 131, 459-485.
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OCT 16th – WEEK 6**HYLEMORPHISM**

- Hylemorphism and the mind body problem, mental causation, the concept of matter. Do all mental faculties require a physiological basis? Aristotle on the Agent Intellect and arguments for the immortality of the human soul.
 - **Readings:**
 - Code, A. 1991 "Aristotle, Searle, and the Mind-Body Problem" In Ernest Lepore & Robert Van Gulick (eds.), *John Searle and His Critics*. Cambridge: Blackwell.
 - Pasnau, R. 2012. "Mind and Hylemorphism" In *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Philosophy*. Edited by John Marenbon. Oxford: Oxford University Press, Chapter 22.
 - Odeberg, D. "Hylemorphic Dualism", Hylemorphic Dualism', in E.F. Paul, F.D. Miller, and J. Paul (eds) *Personal Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005): 70-99. (Originally in *Social Philosophy and Policy* 22 (2005): 70-99.)
 - Optional: Vega, M. "Biological Naturalism: Overdetermination or Causal Multi-Tasking? Some Insights from Aristotle".
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OCT 23th – WEEK 6 READING WEEK**OCT 30th – WEEK 6 MIDTERM**

NOV. 6th – WEEK 7**INTENTIONALITY**

- **Readings:**
 - *Mind: A Brief Introduction*, Chapter 6
 - Brentano, *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, Book II, Chapter 1
 - Drummond, "Intentionality Without Representationalism"
 - Optional: Searle, *Intentionality*, Chapters 1-2
 - Optional: Crane, *Elements of Mind*, Chapter 1
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NOV. 13th – WEEK 8

THE UNCONSCIOUS MIND AND THE BRAIN

- Is all our mental content intentional? The Background. Is there a Cognitive Unconscious neurophysiologically instantiated?
- **Readings:**
 - Searle, John R. “The Unconscious and the explanation of behavior”, *Mind: A Brief Introduction*, chapter 9
 - Searle, John R. 1989. “Consciousness, Unconsciousness, and Intentionality.” *Philosophical Topics* 17 (1):193-209, and *Philosophical Issues*, Vol. 1, Consciousness (1991), pp. 45-66
 - Searle, John R. 1992. *The Rediscovery of the Mind*, chapter 7 and 9, Boston: MIT Press.

NOVEMBER 20st- JOURNAL ENTRIES DUE

NOVEMBER 27th – WEEK 9

IS OUR SENSE OF FREE WILL IN FACT BIOLOGICALLY DETERMINED?

Readings:

- Searle, John R. 2001. “Free Will as a Problem in Neurobiology.” *Philosophy* 76 (298):491-514.
- Searle, John R. 2000. “Consciousness, Free action and the Brain.” *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 7 (10):3-22.
- Mele, Alfred. 2012. *Why Science Hasn't Disproved Free Will*.
- Optional: John R. Searle (2007) “Neuroscience, Intentionality and Free Will: Reply to Habermas”, *Philosophical Explorations*, 10:1, 69-76.

DECEMBER 4th – WEEK 10

IS OUR PERSONAL IDENTITY REDUCIBLE TO OUR PHYSICAL IDENTITY?

Readings:

- Galen Strawson, "The Minimal Subject"
- Zahavi, "The Unity of Consciousness and the Problem of Self"
- John Campbell, "Personal Identity"
- Parfit, "Why Our Identity is Not What Matters"
- Optional: Korsgaard, "Personal Identity and the Unity of Agency: A Kantian Response to Parfit"

DECEMBER 11th

FINAL

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Armstrong, David. 1980. "The Nature of the Mind." *The Nature of the Mind and Other Essays*. University of Queensland Press.
- Bennett, Karen. 2003. "Why the exclusion problem seems intractable and how, just maybe, to tract it." *Noûs* 37 (3):471-97.
- Bisell, R., "A Dual Aspect Approach to the Mind-Body Problem" Reason Papers, 1, 1974.
- Bosco, Francesca M. & Tirassa, Maurizio. 1998. "Sharedness as an innate basis for communication in the infant." In M. A. Gernsbacher & S. J. Derry (eds.), *Proceedings of the 20th Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society*
- Burnyeat, Myles. 1995. "Is Aristotle's Philosophy of Mind Still Credible?". In Nussbaum and Rorty (eds.) 1992 [1995], 15–26.
- Byrne, Alex. [Inverted qualia](#). *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
- Caston, V. "Aristotle and Supervenience," in Ellis 1992, 107–35, 1992.
- Caston, V. 1999. "Aristotle's Two Intellects: A Modest Proposal." *Phronesis*, 44: 199–227.
- Caston, V. 2000. "Aristotle's Argument for Why the Understanding is not Compounded with the Body." *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy*, 16: 135–75.
- Caston, Victor. 1997. "Epiphenomenalisms, ancient and modern." *Philosophical Review* 106 (3):309-363.
- Chadha, Monima. 2007. "No speech, never mind!" *Philosophical Psychology* 20 (5):641 – 657.
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- Cohen, S. Marc. 1992 [1995]. "Hylomorphism and Functionalism." In Nussbaum and Rorty (eds.) 1992 [1995], 57–73.
- Corcilius, K. and Gregoric, P. 2010. "Separability vs. Difference: Parts and Capacities of the Soul in Aristotle." *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 39: 81–120.
- Corcoran, Kevin J. 2001. "The trouble with Searle's biological naturalism." *Erkenntnis* 55 (3):307-324
- Crane, Tim. 1991. "All the difference in the world." *Philosophical Quarterly* 41 (January):1-25
- Crane, Tim. 2001. "Intentional objects." *Ratio* 14 (4):298-317.
- Crane, Tim. 2006. "Brentano's concept of intentional inexistence." In Mark Textor (ed.), *The Austrian Contribution to Analytic Philosophy*. Routledge.
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- Farkas, Katalin. 2003. "What is externalism?" *Philosophical Studies* 112 (3):187-208.
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- 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.
- Hershenov, David (ms). "A Hylomorphic Account of Personal Identity Thought Experiments."
- Hershenov, David. 2006. "Personal Identity and Purgatory". *Religious Studies* 42 (4):439-451.
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- J.R. Searle. 2001. "Freedom of the Will as a Problem in Neurobiology".
- Jackson, Frank. 1986. "What Mary Didn't Know." *Journal of Philosophy* 83: 291–295.
- Jing Zhu, "Reclaiming Volition. An Alternative Interpretation of Libet's Experiment"
- John R. Searle. 1979. "What is an intentional State" *Mind* 88, n. 349: 74-92
- Kallestrup, Jesper. 2006. "The causal exclusion argument." *Philosophical Studies* 131 (2):459-85.
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- King, Peter. 2005. "Why isn't the mind-body problem medieval?" In Peter King (ed.), *Forming the Mind*. Springer-Verlag.
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