

Mind and Body

PHL 303M: Spring 2020 Syllabus
T/TR 11:00-12:15, Waggener Hall 214

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Course description

This is an introductory philosophy of mind course in which we will explore various answers to the so-called “mind-body problem”. The mind-body problem can be thought of as an “umbrella” term which includes such questions as, “Is my mind identical to my brain?”, “What is consciousness?”, and “Could my mind survive my bodily death?”. If the answers to any of these questions are of interest to you, then you will likely find value in taking this course.

Throughout the term we will see some incredibly intelligent thinkers disagree over how we ought to “solve” the mind-body problem. You may feel swayed by a particular philosopher’s theory one week, only to find yourself questioning the very same theory the following week. This is normal! By the end of the course, it is unlikely that you will feel you have a solid answer to the mind-body problem. It *is* quite likely, however, that you will finish this course with sharper abstract reasoning skills, an improved ability to write in a clear and concise way, and an appreciation for the complicated philosophical terrain we will be exploring together.

Required text: Ravenscroft, Ian. *Philosophy of Mind: A Beginner’s Guide* (ISBN: 978-0-19-925254-1).

In an effort to mitigate additional costs, all other readings for this class will be available via Canvas (in PDF format) or can be found online.

Course requirements and grading

The graded components for this course are as follows:

Essay 1 (due on 3/12)—**30%**

Essay 2 (due on 4/14)—**30%**

Essay 3 (due on 5/7)—**30%**

Participation in peer review workshops—**10%**

In this course you will be expected to write three essays, each of which will be roughly 750 words (around 3 pages). Essays must be uploaded electronically to Canvas **in either .doc, .docx, or .pdf format** (.pages files will *not* be accepted and will be considered late). Each of the three essays will

count equally toward your final course grade. In addition, the week before each essay is due there will be a peer review workshop for which attendance is mandatory. Attendance and participation at these sessions will be graded on a pass/fail basis. Failure to attend a review session (without a documented excuse, such as a doctor's note) will result in a 0/1 grade for that session. Since there are only three workshop days, there are only 3 pass/fail points which collectively make up 10% of your final grade—in other words, do *not* miss workshop days!

Please note also that all three essays are mandatory course requirements. Failure to complete an essay will result in an automatic failure for the course. This includes students taking the course on a pass/fail basis.

Grading scale

A	94-100%	C	73-76%
A-	90-93%	C-	70-72%
B+	87-89%	D+	67-69%
B	83-86%	D	63-66%
B-	80-82%	D-	60-62%
C+	77-79%	F	0-59%

Attendance and reading expectations: reading quiz policy

Students are expected to attend class and to complete the day's required reading prior to coming to class. In the event that attendance becomes too low or that a significant portion of the class is not completing the readings before class, I reserve the right to introduce a reading quiz policy.

In that event, students will be quizzed on the readings at the beginning of class on a pass-fail basis. Students who do not pass (either because they were absent, or because they could not complete the quiz to merit a passing grade) will have points deducted from the next essay that is graded. If this policy is implemented at any point in the semester, I will likely stop assigning quizzes once attendance and reading has improved. This is not something I look forward to doing, so please help yourself and your fellow students by maintaining proper attendance and keeping up with the readings!

Participation

The readings and the ideas we will be grappling with in class will be both thought-provoking and complex. You will do better in this course if you take advantage of our class time together by participating and asking questions, and by talking through and engaging with the ideas and questions raised by your peers.

Instructor's email policy

Before emailing either myself or [REDACTED], please check both the syllabus and the course's Canvas site to see if the information you are looking for has been provided there. I will usually respond to emails by the next business day, which means I may not always reply on the weekends. Please also note that I will rarely respond to student emails late at night, which includes the night before an essay is due. If you have questions or need to contact me about something, it is important to get in contact with me well ahead of time.

Policy on extensions and late paper submissions

Students will be granted extensions only in extenuating circumstances (such as a significant medical issue) and will be required to supply relevant documentation (such as a doctor's note). Except in extreme cases, requests for extensions can only be made 24 hours before the due date or earlier.

In the event of a late submission, essays will be docked one third of a letter grade for each day or part-day they are late. So, a late paper submitted within 24 hours of the deadline will be docked 1/3 of a letter grade, papers submitted between 24 and 48 hours late will be docked 2/3 of a grade, and papers submitted between 48 and 72 hours late will be docked a whole letter grade. Papers submitted more than 72 hours late will receive no credit.

Students with disabilities

Please notify your instructor of any modification/adaptation you may require to accommodate a disability-related need. You may find out more information on the Services for Students with Disabilities website: <http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/> and/or <http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/how-to-register-with-ssd/>.

Policy on scholastic dishonesty

This course has a zero-tolerance policy for any form of plagiarism or academic dishonesty. Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. If caught engaging in either plagiarism or any other form of academic dishonesty, the HIGHEST possible final grade a student can receive in this class is a C, and more egregious instances of plagiarism will result in an automatic F for the course and reporting to the Dean. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. For further information, please visit the Office of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity website at <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct/>.

Course schedule and content

A note about the course schedule: No rigid reading schedule will be posted for this course. Rather, I will post due dates for readings in class and online as the class works its way through the course material. This structure allows us to proceed at whatever pace works best for us as a class. I will always adjust the content covered in the essay prompts according to where we are at that point, so there is no need to worry if it feels we are “behind”!

Important dates

Peer review workshops:

-Thursday, **3/5** (for essay 1)

-Tuesday, **4/7** (for essay 2)

-Thursday, **4/30** (for essay 3)

Paper due dates:

-Thursday, **3/12** (essay 1)

-Tuesday, **4/14** (essay 2)

-Thursday, **5/7** (the last day of class, essay 3)

Spring break begins on **3/16, so there will be no class meetings (or office hours) on **3/17** and **3/19**.

Readings

****All readings can be found in either the Ravenscroft volume, in the “files” section on Canvas, or online!**

Unit 1: Getting acquainted with philosophy

Readings:

- Joel Feinberg, ed. Russ Shafer-Landau, “A Logic Lesson”
- David Concepcion, modified by Tim Loughrist, “How to read philosophy”
- Peter van Inwagen, “Objectivity” (optional)
- Shelly Kagan, “Why Study Philosophy?” (optional)

Unit 2: Major 20th century theories of the mind

2a) Starting out: Introduction and substance dualism

Readings:

- Ravenscroft, “Introduction” (important—do not skip!)
- Ravenscroft Ch. 1, sections 1-3
- Brie Gertler, “In Defense of Mind-Body Dualism”

2b) Property dualism and epiphenomenalism; the problem of mental causation*Readings:*

- Ravenscroft Ch. 1, sections 4-6
- Ravenscroft Ch. 10
- Jaegwon Kim, “The Many Problems of Mental Causation”

2c) Introduction to physicalism*Readings:*

- Daniel Stoljar, sections 1-4 of “Physicalism” (SEP)
- David Papineau, “The Case for Materialism”

2d) Behaviorism and the Turing test*Readings:*

- Ravenscroft Ch. 2
- Alan Turing, “Computing Machinery and Intelligence” (excerpt)

2e) Identity theory*Readings:*

- Ravenscroft Ch. 3

2f) Functionalism*Readings:*

- Ravenscroft Ch. 4
- Ravenscroft p. 91-94, 186-187
- John Searle, “Minds, Brains, and Programs” (excerpt)
- Ned Block, “Troubles with Functionalism” (excerpt)
- Martine Nida-Rumelin, “Pseudonormal Vision: An Actual Case of Qualia Inversion?”

Unit 3: The hard problem*Readings:*

- Ravenscroft Ch. 12
- Frank Jackson, “Epiphenomenal Qualia” (excerpt)
- Thomas Nagel, “What Is It Like to Be a Bat?” (excerpt)
- David Chalmers, “Consciousness and Its Place in Nature” (excerpt)

Unit 4: Panpsychism

Readings:

- Galen Strawson, “Realistic Monism: Why Physicalism Entails Panpsychism”

Unit 5: Personal identity

Readings:

- Derek Parfit, “Reductionism and Personal Identity” (excerpt)
- John Perry, “Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality”

Other units and readings will be announced later on, time permitting. Among the possible topics we could end the course with, we could discuss the mind-body problem in relation to mental illness or else Nick Bostrom’s (now infamous) Simulation Argument.