

PHI 3320 THE PHILOSOPHY OF MIND

Dr. Nicholas Power

Course Overview: Though our understanding of the brain has expanded at a remarkable rate-in this, the decade of the brain-it is arguably the single greatest mystery of the Universe. It can reasonably be said that we have no widely accepted ideas as to how 'soggy gray matter' gives rise to what it apparently does give rise to. The brain is responsible for the pleasures felt while listening to song; the decisions made while writing an essay; the motives to act; actions themselves; self-consciousness itself; to name just a few. It may be that we will never have a consensus on the 'matter'. These experienced phenomena are unique in all of nature in that they can only be understood from the point of view of that thing experiencing them. How can subjective experience be conceived so as to fall under the objective scrutiny of science? Is our everyday conception of the mental realm somehow internally flawed? This course will explore both philosophical positions on the study of mind as well as non-philosophical sources on the study of mind. No background in philosophy, logic, or psychology will be presumed. The student will be introduced to the major philosophical issues surrounding minds, mental phenomena, and their place in an objective world. We will draw upon a broad array of thinkers-from philosophers, ancient and contemporary, to psychologists, neuropsychologists, linguists, and cognitive scientists-and examine a broad range of issues

Required Texts: Paul M. Churchland: *Matter and Consciousness: A Contemporary Introduction to The Philosophy of Mind*, Revised Edition
Peter A. Morton: *A Historical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mind*
Michael Tye: *The Ten Problems of Consciousness*, (selections of this are on reserve in the library)

Outline of Study:

A Historical Introduction to the Mind-Body Problem - 3 Ways of Approaching the Mind-Body Nexus: (1) Private Meaning; (2) Subjective and Objective; and (3) Science, Religion and Reduction - Ontological Theories (Epistemology and Ontology; Cartesian Dualism; Panpsychism; Early Identity Theories; Dual Aspect Theory; Functionalism)

Mental Content and the Brain Sciences - Belief/Desire Psychology and Propositional Attitudes - The Language of Thought Hypothesis & The Computational Theory of Thought - Competing Models of Cognitive Architecture; From Freud to Fodor, from philosophy to artificial intelligence - Neurocomputational Perspective; Reifying the Attitudes and Modeling Behavior-The Impossibility of Eliminativism

Consciousness - Qualia-The Subjective Features of Experiences - Knowing That and Knowing How; What It's Like to Be a Bat; Black-and-White Mary; Descartes' Argument from Doubt Revisited - Is the Hard Problem of Consciousness a Genuine One? Is it Really Intractable?; Dennett's "*Quining Qualia*" and Flanagan's *Selections*.

Homework and Exams: You will be required to write 5 approx. bi-weekly, short (about 3 typed pages) response papers on assigned reading materials. There will be two exams: one Mid-term and one Final

Grading Policy: The grade in this course will be determined as follows:

Class Participation	10%
Response Papers	50%
Mid-term Exam	20%
Final Exam	20%

Class Participation: Class attendance is a significant part of class participation. 'Role' will be taken at the beginning of each class meeting. Lack of attendance leaves the impression that you don't care about a session's topic, and that has a way of effecting your grade. Lack of attendance also has a way of interfering with handing in work on time. Response papers need to be turned in on time to keep current with the course work and to fulfill your obligations to the group. Late work is unacceptable.

All University policies concerning **withdrawal** from the course, **plagiarism** and other forms of cheating, etc. are in full effect. Consult your *Student Handbook* for details.