

PHILOSOPHY OF MIND AND COGNITIVE SCIENCE
PHIL 30400, FALL 2018

Dr. Devin Sanchez Curry

dcurry@wooster.edu

Class sessions: Scovel 205, M/W 2:00–3:20

Office hours: Scovel 002, T/W 9:30–10:50

The first unit of this introduction to the philosophical and scientific study of cognition and consciousness will address metaphysical questions: *what's the relation between minds and brains? Can machines think, feel, or act? How are cognitive systems organized?* The second unit will address epistemological questions: *how do you know that other people have minds? How can psychologists and neuroscientists study human and animal minds? And how well do we know our own minds, anyway?* The course will culminate with each student researching a mental state or process of their choosing.

Required books

Jerry Fodor, *The Modularity of Mind* (MIT Press 1983)

Eric Schwitzgebel, *Perplexities of Consciousness* (MIT Press 2011)

Brief grading breakdown

Participation: 6%

Position paper: 12% (due 9/5)

Take-home exam: 30% (due 10/15)

Thesis paper: 12% (due 11/5)

Literature review: 10% (due 11/19)

Final paper: 30% (due 12/12)

Brief schedule

Day 1: Can thermometers feel? Can computers think? Can robots do things for reasons?

Metaphysics of Cognition and Consciousness

Week 1: The mind-body problem

Week 2: The mind/brain identity theory

Week 3: Functionalism

Week 4: Cognitive architecture

Week 5: Computationalism and the modularity of mind

Week 6: Central cognition and real patterns

Epistemology of Cognition and Consciousness

Week 7: Problems of other minds

Week 8: Methodological issues in cognitive ethology and evolutionary psychology

Week 9: Methodological issues in cognitive neuroscience and the behavioral sciences

Week 10: Perceptual perplexities

Week 11: Consciousness and introspection

Week 12: Experience

Cartography of Mind

Weeks 13–14: Student generated content

Detailed grading breakdown

Position paper (12%)

A 500–750 word position paper will be due before an in-class debate on 9/5. On 8/29, you will join a group tasked with defending either substance dualism, dispositionalism, or the mind-brain identity theory. You will then write a paper consisting of an argument for your assigned theory of the mind-body relation (6% of your total grade), as well as objections to each of the other two theories (3% each). These arguments and objections should be accurate and clear reformulations, *in your own words*, of material from class readings, lectures, and discussions.

Take-home exam (30%)

A take-home exam on the metaphysics of mind will be due on 10/15. The exam will consist of three essay prompts, each to be answered in 500–750 words (and each worth 10% of your grade). You will be graded on how accurately and thoroughly you respond to each part of each prompt.

Thesis paper (12%)

A 500–750 word thesis paper about a methodological issue in cognitive science will be due on 11/5. In this paper, you will devise an original argument (either for a novel conclusion or using novel premises in support of another author's conclusion) and consider an objection to your argument. You will be graded on the validity of your argument (3%), the persuasiveness of your reasoning (3%), the thoughtfulness of the objection to your own argument (3%), and the strength of your reply to that objection (3%).

Literature review (10%)

A 500–750 word review of philosophical literature on the topic of your final paper will be due (in hard copy and on Moodle) on 11/19. You must come to office hours before fall break to discuss potential topics. Once we have settled on a topic, I will suggest readings; your literature review must also feature an article that I have not suggested. You will be graded on how accurately (5%) and clearly (5%) you explain central arguments in the literature. Your literature review will be required reading for the whole class on 11/26, 11/28, 12/3, or 12/5.

Final paper (30%)

A 1,000–2,000 word final paper will be due on 12/12. You will be graded on how well you show off the skills developed through and tested by the previous class assignments.

Participation (6%)

2% of your grade will be based on contributions to the in-class debate on 9/5. An additional 1% per session will be awarded for helping classmates brainstorm final papers during the classes on 11/26, 11/28, 12/3, and 12/5. (You will *not* be graded on how well you brainstorm your own paper topic.)

In addition, daily class participation will be the determining factor if you end up on the

borderline between two grades (e.g. B+/A-). Some tips: come to each class having read—and, if necessary for comprehension, reread—the assigned readings. Ask questions. Contribute to class discussion when you have something to say. Listen to your peers carefully and respectfully whether or not you have something to say.

Sample final paper topics (in no particular order)

Belief	Desire	Reasoning
Concepts	Mental speech	Episodic memory
Procedural memory	Imagination	Pain
Pleasure	Mindreading	Mental content
Perceptual content	Perceptual phenomenology	Mental imagery
Qualia	Temporal experience	Bodily experience
Attention	Emotions	A specific emotion
The self	Character traits	Mind wandering
Creativity	Intelligence	Dreams
Unconscious states	Animal mental states	Animal consciousness

Policies

Due dates and extensions

Hard copies of all assignments are due at the beginning of class. If you need an extension of the deadline for the take-home exam, thesis paper, literature review, or final paper, please ask in writing in advance of the deadline (a brief email is fine). I will grant a 48-hour grace period, no questions asked. If you need more than two extra days, you must set up an appointment to meet with me and devise a concrete plan for finishing the assignment.

Late assignments

In the absence of an extension, assignments will be penalized one point (1% of your total grade) for each day they are late.

Plagiarism

Don't do it. Exercise academic integrity, as defined by the Code of Academic Integrity published in *The Scot's Key*. Plagiarism (or abetting another student plagiarizing) will result in an automatic zero on the plagiarized assignment, as well as an official report. If you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please consult the Academic Integrity Online Handbook and/or ask me.

Accommodations

If you have good reason to be exempt from (or subject to a modified version of) any policy on this syllabus, please let me know. We'll work something out. Students with diagnosed disabilities should contact Kaylynn Mahone, Assistant Director of the Learning Center (ext. 2595; kmahone@wooster.edu), to make arrangements for securing appropriate accommodations.

Detailed schedule

8/22: Can thermometers feel? Can computers think? Can robots do things for reasons?

Reading: Handout on consciousness, intentionality, and agency

Metaphysics of Cognition and Consciousness

8/27: The mind-body problem, hylomorphism, dualism, and materialism

Reading: Aristotle, *De Anima* (selection)

Descartes, *Principles of Philosophy* (selection)

Elisabeth of Bohemia, Correspondence with Descartes (selection)

Hobbes, *De Corpore* (selection)

8/29: Behaviorism and dispositionalism

Reading: Skinner, *Verbal Behavior* (selection)

Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (selection)

9/3: The mind/brain identity theory

Reading: Place, "Is Consciousness a Brain Process?"

9/5: Class debate

Reading: None (position papers due)

9/10: Cognitivism and multiple realizability

Reading: Chomsky, "A Review of B.F. Skinner's *Verbal Behavior*" (selection)

Turing, "Computing Machinery and Intelligence" (selection)

9/12: Functionalism

Reading: Putnam, "The Nature of Mental States"

9/17: Levels of psychological explanation

Reading: Marr, *Vision* (selection)

Drayson, "The Personal/Subpersonal Distinction"

9/19: Mental architecture

Reading: Fodor, "Four Accounts of Mental Structure"

9/24: Computationalism and its rivals

Reading: Fodor, "A Functional Taxonomy of Cognitive Mechanisms"

Hatfield, "Cognition"

9/26: Modularity

Reading: Fodor, "Input Systems as Modules"

10/1: Central cognition

Reading: Fodor, "Central Systems" and "Caveats and Conclusions"

10/3: Intentional realism(s)

Reading: Dennett, "Real Patterns"

Epistemology of Cognition and Consciousness

10/15: Problems of other minds

Reading: Nagel, "What is it like to be a Bat?" pages 435–442 (take-homes due)

10/17: The (hard?) problem of consciousness

Reading: Nagel, "What is it like to be a Bat?" pages 443–450
Churchland, "The Hornswoggle Problem"

10/22: Methodological issues in cognitive ethology

Reading: Andrews, "Chimpanzee Mindreading: Don't Stop Believing"

10/24: Methodological issues in evolutionary psychology

Reading: Lloyd, "Evolutionary Psychology: The Burdens of Proof"

10/29: Methodological issues in cognitive neuroscience

Reading: Fodor, "Is Cognitive Neuroscience a Waste of Time?"
Farah, "Brain Images, Babies, and Bathwater: Critiquing Critiques of Functional Neuroimaging"

10/31: Methodological issues in the behavioral sciences

Reading: Henrich et al., "The Weirdest People in the World?"

11/5: Dreaming

Reading: Schwitzgebel, "Recoloring the Dreamworld" (thesis papers due)

11/7: Perceptual experience

Reading: Schwitzgebel, "Do Things Look Flat?" and "Human Echolocation"

11/12: Mental imagery and the texture of consciousness

Reading: Schwitzgebel, "Galton's Other Folly" and "Do you Have Constant Tactile Experience of your Feet in your Shoes?"

11/14: Introspection

Reading: Schwitzgebel, "The Unreliability of Naïve Introspection"

11/19: Visual experience with eyes closed

Reading: Schwitzgebel, "When your Eyes are Closed, what do you See?" (reviews due)

Cartography of Mind

11/26: Student generated content

Reading: Literature reviews

11/28: Student generated content

Reading: Literature reviews

12/3: Student generated content

Reading: Literature reviews

12/5: Student generated content

Reading: Literature reviews

12/12: Final papers due