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**Office:** Arnold Hall (650 Price St), room 112  
**Office hours:** Tues 1:25–2:25pm; Weds 9–11am

**PHILOSOPHY OF MIND**  
PHIL 306, SPRING 2024  
11:30am–12:45pm T/R, Oglebay 102

This course will survey important historical and contemporary strands in the philosophy of cognition and consciousness. We'll begin by asking whether you're made out of meat, and end by asking whether you're made out of stories. Along the way, via close engagement with philosophical and scientific texts, we'll discuss the relationship between minds and brains, the philosophical foundations of cognitive science, the possibility of artificial intelligence, and the mysteries of consciousness.

**Brief grading breakdown**

Four participation logs: 20%  
Four reflections: 30% (lowest grade dropped)  
History exam: 25%  
Consciousness exam: 25%  
Thesis paper: optional, replaces lower exam grade

**Grade scale**

A: 90–100%  
B: 80–89%  
C: 70–79%  
D: 60–69%  
F: 0–59%

**Brief schedule**

**Part I: The Mind/Body Problem and other Mysteries**

Week 1: Minds made out of meat

Week 2: Dreams and doubts

*log and reflection due 1/19*

**Part II: The Rise of Cognitive Science**

Week 3: Dualism and materialism

Week 4: Is your mind your brain? Is it a black box?

Week 5: The classic computer analogy

*log due 2/9*

Week 6: History exam week

*history exam on 2/15*

**Part III: Perception and Cognition**

Week 7: Psychofunctional architecture

Week 8: The perception-cognition divide

*reflection due 2/27*

Week 9: Predictive processing

*Spring break!*

Week 10: The psychological immune system (*no class*)

Week 11: A new computer analogy

*log and reflection due 3/29*

**Part IV: Consciousness (and the Self)**

Week 12: What is it like to be a bat?

Week 13: What is it like to be a human?

Week 14: Is consciousness itself an illusion?

*reflection due 4/19*

Week 15: Selves made out of stories

*log due 4/26*

*consc. exam on 5/2, 8–10am*

### **Full grading breakdown**

#### **Participation (20%)**

The main aim of this course is for each student to thoughtfully participate in complex discussions about cognition and consciousness. Participation will be self-graded via four logs (due 1/19, 2/9, 3/29, and 4/26) worth five points each.

#### **Reflections (30%)**

You will also complete four reflection assignments (due 1/19, 2/27, 3/29, and 4/19). Each reflection will consist of two paragraphs: (1) a paragraph explaining what you find interesting about the most interesting thing you have learned from the course (since your last reflection), and (2) a paragraph asking a lingering question you still have about the material we have covered (since your last reflection) and explaining why you find the question puzzling. I will likely cold call on you in a future class meeting to have you discuss the most interesting thing you've learned or to have you ask your lingering question. Each reflection is worth ten points; your lowest reflection grade will be dropped.

#### **Two exams (25% each)**

There will be an in-class exam on 2/15 and a final exam on 5/2 (from 8–10am). Each exam will require you to answer five short-answer questions and write an essay (in response to a prompt). I will distribute a detailed study guide before each exam, and you will be allowed to consult one piece of paper featuring your own pre-prepared notes.

#### **Extra credit thesis paper**

In addition to the above assignments, you have the option to write a final paper defending an original thesis in the philosophy of mind. In order to receive credit for this optional assignment, you must go through the full thesis paper writing process with me. That process will include attending a writing workshop I put on outside of our normal class period, sketching at least one argument for your thesis and meeting one-on-one with me to discuss your argument sketch, crafting a paper outline and meeting one-on-one with me to discuss your outline, and then finally writing the (1,500–3,000 word) paper itself. Papers will be due on 5/1. Your paper grade will replace your lower exam grade.

#### **Attendance**

Missing class will hurt your participation grade. Much more importantly, attending and engaging in class is essential to cultivating critical thinking skills and a philosophical frame of mind (and thus getting your time and money's worth for taking this course). Plus, sometimes we'll do fun in-class demonstrations which you won't want to miss.

#### **Late policy**

All participation logs and reflections must be uploaded to eCampus by 11:59pm on the due date. Late assignments will not be accepted unless an extension of the deadline has been granted in advance (but don't hesitate to ask for an extension if you need one).

## **Other information, policies, and expectations**

### **Course materials**

On our eCampus page, you will find pdfs of all required readings, places to submit your participation logs and reflections, and your grades.

### **Contacting me**

You should reach out early and often about any issues you're having with the course. I'll respond to all questions posed via email within one work day.

### **Office hours**

I'll be available on Tuesdays from 1:25–2:25pm and Wednesdays from 9:00–11:00am, in my physical office (Arnold 112) or on Zoom (if arranged in advance via email). That time is specifically set aside to talk to students; I highly recommend taking advantage by dropping in and asking any and all questions you have about the course.

### **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. If you have a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in this course, please also make appropriate arrangements with the Office of Accessibility Services (<https://accessibilityservices.wvu.edu/>).

### **Plagiarism (and AI tools)**

Don't do it. Exercise academic integrity, as defined by the WVU Policy on Student Academic Integrity. If you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please ask. Plagiarism will result in a zero on the plagiarized assignment and a formal complaint. Using ChatGPT (or any other large language model) without attribution is a form of plagiarism. You may not use any AI tool for any course-related purpose unless you first clear the use with me. (Don't hesitate to message me if you have a reasonable use!)

### **Statement of non-discrimination**

The West Virginia University community is committed to creating and fostering a positive learning and working environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and inclusion. Our class discussions will be predicated on these commitments.

### **Expected learning outcomes**

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be better able to: 1) identify, describe, and evaluate the aims, strategies, assumptions, and arguments of philosophical and scientific texts; 2) understand the fundamental contours of key debates in the philosophy of cognition and consciousness; 3) apply a philosophical lens to conceptual questions in cognitive science.

## Detailed schedule of readings

(\* = primary; † = optional)

**Part I: The Mind/Body Problem and other Mysteries**

1/9: You're made out of meat

**Reading:** Bisson, "They're Made out of Meat" †

1/11: Three marks of the mental

**Reading:** Handout on Consciousness, Intentionality, and Agency  
Heyes, "What is Cognition?" †

1/16: Doubting and dreaming

**Reading:** Descartes, *Meditations* (I, II) †  
Schwitzgebel, "Recoloring the Dreamworld"

1/18: Doubts about ordinary perceptual experience

**Reading:** Schwitzgebel, "Do Things Look Flat?" \*  
Morales, Bax, and Firestone, "Sustained Rep. of Perspectival Shape" (1–2, 8–9)1/19: *log and reflection due***Part II: The Rise of Cognitive Science**

1/23: Dualism and materialism

**Reading:** Descartes, *Principles* (§§51–53, 60, 63)  
Elisabeth of Bohemia, Correspondence with Descartes (selection) \*  
Hobbes, *De Corpore* (selection) †

1/25: The myth of the ghost in the machine

**Reading:** Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (Ch. I, Ch. II §7)  
Wiredu, "The Akan Concept of Mind" (153–160, 166–168) \*

1/30: The mind/brain identity theory

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

2/1: Behaviorism and cognitivism

**Reading:** Skinner, *Verbal Behavior* (10–12) †  
Chomsky, "A Review of B.F. Skinner's *Verbal Behavior*" (§§I–V, XI)

2/6: The computer analogy

**Reading:** Turing, "Computing Machinery and Intelligence" (433–442, 454–460)  
Marr, *Vision* (69–74) †

2/8: Functionalism

**Reading:** Putnam, "The Nature of Mental States"2/9: *log due*

2/13: Catch-up and review

2/15: *In-class history exam*

### Part III: Perception and Cognition

2/20: Theories about the structure of the mind

**Reading:** Fodor, "Four Accounts of Mental Structure" (1–14, 21–22, 36–38)

2/22: The modularity of perception and language processing

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

Fodor, "Input Systems as Modules" (47–72, 86–87) †

2/27: The perception-cognition divide (*reflection due*)

**Reading:** Firestone and Scholl, "Cognition Does Not Affect Perception" (1–18)

Fodor, "Input Systems as Modules" (98–101) †

2/29: Central cognition

**Reading:** Fodor, "Central Systems"

"Caveats and Conclusions" (119, 126–129) †

3/5: An alternative to Fodor's classical computationalism

**Reading:** Clark, "Unboxing the Prediction Machine"

3/7: Predicting and acting

**Reading:** Clark, "Action as Self-Fulfilling Prediction"

*Spring break!*

3/19 and 3/21: no class—Curry at the meeting of the American Philosophical Association

Please get a head start on the reading for next week! The Mandelbaum is quite difficult, and the Buckner is quite long.

3/26: The psychological immune system

**Reading:** Mandelbaum, "Troubles with Bayesianism" (141–142, 149–154)

3/28: Deep neural networks as unflattering mirrors of human minds

**Reading:** Buckner, "Black Boxes or Unflattering Mirrors?"

3/29: *log and reflection due*

### Part IV: Consciousness and the Self

4/2: Dualism redux

**Reading:** Lycan, "Giving Dualism its Due"

4/4: Subjectivity as an inner light

**Reading:** Lee, "The Light & the Room"

4/9: What is it like to be a bat?

**Reading:** Nagel, "What is it Like to be a Bat?"

4/11: What is it like to be a human?

**Reading:** Schwitzgebel, "Human Echolocation" †

Schwitzgebel, "Do you have Constant Tactile Experience of Feet in Shoes?"

4/16: Does it make any sense to say that consciousness is an illusion?

**Reading:** Frankish, "Like a Rainbow"

Chalmers, "The Metaproblem of Consciousness" (6–15, 34–35) \*

4/18: Is there a hard problem of consciousness?

**Reading:** Chalmers, "The Metaproblem of Consciousness" (40–44, 52–56)

4/19: *reflection due*

4/23: You're made out of stories

**Reading:** Dennett, "The Self as a Center of Narrative Gravity"

Borges, "Borges and I" †

4/25: About whom do we tell stories about selves?

**Reading:** Camp, "Wordsworth's Prelude ... and Narrative Constructions of the Self"

4/26: *log due*

5/2, 8:00-10:00am: *consciousness exam (in our standard classroom)*

## Recommended books

We'll be reading a big chunk of each of the following books. Since eCampus only has the excerpts I've assigned, you might want to get your own copy of one or all of them.

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

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

Andy Clark, *The Experience Machine* (Pantheon 2023)

## AI reading group

If you're interested in thinking more deeply about the relationship between artificial intelligence and the philosophy of mind (which is a topic we'll touch on a few times in this course, but not study in depth), you're invited to join an informal AI reading group that will meet every other Tuesday starting at 2:30pm in the multipurpose room on the ground floor of Arnold Hall. (We'll hold a first, logistical meeting on January 9<sup>th</sup>.) The group will be reading Cameron Buckner's new book, [From Deep Learning to Rational Machines](#). Participation is totally optional, and will not count for course credit.