

# Philosophy 164: Philosophy of Mind

Spring 2009 CRN 24527 Section 01 MWF 9:05-10:00 Brower 203

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## Overview

Your mind is what you think and feel with, and it's what you make choices with; your mind directs what you do. Lots of things don't have minds: cars, rocks, the rain. Lots of things do: people, babies, dogs, dolphins, gerbils (maybe . . .) What's the difference? Since antiquity answers veer back and forth between "dualism" (we have a soul—an immaterial, non-physical part—and they don't) and "materialism" (put the right kind of material stuff in the right arrangement, and matter is a mind). Both positions have a hard time explaining how we ever make a difference in the world. If our minds are radically different from physical stuff, and the physical world just follows the laws of physics, then how could our minds cause anything? On the other hand, if we are nothing but physical stuff, then don't we just disappear? So the body does all the causing, and the mind is just a funny way of looking at what the body does?

We will begin by looking at this conversation as it took place between Plato and Aristotle, and then at the beginning of the contemporary scientific world view with Descartes and T.H.Huxley. We'll look at contemporary models of how the mind could be physical. Then we'll spend some time on the core concepts of properties, causation and laws of nature. The last part of the course will be about the mental causation problem: can your mind make a difference in the physical world, if you are nothing but molecules in motion?

## Texts

Dardis, A. (2008). *Mental Causation: The Mind-Body Problem*. Columbia University Press, New York.

Harvey, G. (1998). *Writing with Sources*. Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis.

Lyons, W. (2001). *Matters of the Mind*. Routledge, New York.

Plato (1977). *Phaedo*. Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis, second edition.

Translated by G.M.A. Grube.

Dardis, Anthony. Logic Handouts.

## Requirements

Six papers: 5 short (2-3 pages) each worth 12% of your grade, and one longer final paper (8-10 pages) worth 40%. Lead class discussion 1 or 2 times.

## Class format

This class is a seminar. This means that there will be a lot of discussion and student interaction, and relatively little lecturing by the instructor. To structure the discussions, you have an additional responsibility:

Most of our sections together will be led by one of you. At the beginning of the semester you will sign up to be discussion leader at least once. Your task will be to present a summary of the reading for the day, and to pose challenging questions about the reading to get our discussion started. You must write up a 2-page presentation for the class, in which you briefly describe what we have read, and in which you offer a critical commentary on it. You should aim to *speak* with the class, rather than reading what you have written—it is extraordinarily difficult to keep an audience’s interest if you are reading a prepared text.

These presentations will not be graded but I will comment on them in writing. (Leading a class discussion on a given text or subject matter is an excellent way to work on a paper.)

## Papers

- (a) The short papers. You’ll be writing one approximately every two weeks. As you are reading, and as we are discussing, ask yourself “what is the most puzzling and interesting thing I’m running into here?” The aim of the paper is (a) to describe the argument that is so puzzling and interesting, and (b) to state a critical response to the argument. The aim of these papers is to hone your skills in finding the arguments in texts, in describing them, and in critically evaluating them. I place more emphasis on a thoughtful imaginative critical evaluation than on description.
- (b) The final paper. The aim of this paper is to work out your own thoughts about the mind. Your paper must work with at least three sources from the readings we are doing in class and must in addition draw on at least three other sources. There are many places to look for additional sources. A good guide to philosophy sources is available at [http://www.hofstra.edu/Libraries/lib\\_srg\\_philosophy.cfm](http://www.hofstra.edu/Libraries/lib_srg_philosophy.cfm). The *Philosopher’s Index* is a database (available on-line through the Hofstra Library Web page) of all nearly all philosophical writing published for the last 60 years. And don’t forget the on-line Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, which often contains very good overviews of topics in philosophy and philosophy of mind.

Good papers have three features: good thinking (interesting, insightful, accurate critical response to the reasoning); good understanding (accurate and insightful description of philosophical reasoning, especially from texts); and good mechanics (organization, spelling, grammar).

You will be writing about classic and contemporary works on the philosophy of mind. Each short paper must include at least one bibliographic reference, in the form of a footnote or an end-note; the long paper will have at least six such references. I do not have any preferences about the form of the reference, except one: the reference should as far as possible uniquely identify what you are talking about, by specifying the city of publication, the year of publication, the publisher, the page, and (where appropriate) the “standard pagination” of the text you are referring to. (For example, editions of Descartes’s works always include a pagination in the margin from the standard edition of Adam and Tannery; the first line of the *Meditations* thus occurs at AT 7, 17.) You should also include a reference if you use or discuss the ideas of others, for instance ideas that have come up in class from me or from your classmates.<sup>1</sup> See the required text (Harvey, 1998) for how to cite. There are citation style guides at the Hofstra Library main web page; your instructor tends to use the

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<sup>1</sup>I want to thank James Wilkerson for discussion of ideas about how to organize a syllabus.

APA style (American Psychological Association) in his work. Suggestion: use/get a good reference management system for your computer.<sup>2</sup>

All papers must be typed, using standard margins and standard typefaces and fonts.

## Policies

- No late papers accepted. Hard copy **only** (no emailed papers).
- Any paper except the final paper may be rewritten. You must talk with me prior to doing a rewrite.
- Excuse clause: stuff happens. If for some reason you are unable to hand in work, let me know as soon as possible, and be ready to provide documentation.
- A paper with no complete bibliographic reference will receive the grade of F.
- Turn off your phone or beeper while you are in class.
- If you must leave class early, please inform me before class starts. (We will have a regular break in this class; otherwise, plan on remaining in the classroom.)
- If you cannot attend class, please inform me.
- **Plagiarism.** If I have reason to believe that any kind of plagiarism whatsoever has occurred I will request a discussion of the work. If plagiarism has occurred, I will ask for the work to be completely rewritten. If rewritten work contains plagiarism, I will award the grade of F **for the course**. I will always file an academic dishonesty form with the Dean of Students if I believe that plagiarism has occurred. See the *Hofstra Writer's Guide* for a definition of plagiarism. I believe that the main reason plagiarism occurs is that writers discover *too late* that they don't know what they are doing. Make sure to give yourself plenty of time to write and to document your sources, and plenty of time to figure out whether you know what you are doing (and plenty of time to come talk to me if you aren't sure).
- Attendance is required. I will take attendance. If you are absent more than 6 times you will receive the grade of F.
- You are welcome to use a computer in class to take notes or for other class-related purposes. If you use a computer for any non-class-related purpose, I will mark you absent for that day. (Notice that phones and iPods are computers.)

## Learning goals and objectives

This course has the following learning goals and objectives (drawn from the HCLAS General Education Learning Goals, at [http://www.hofstra.edu/Academics/Colleges/Hclas/hclas\\_goals.html](http://www.hofstra.edu/Academics/Colleges/Hclas/hclas_goals.html)):

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<sup>2</sup>The latest versions of Microsoft Word include a reference manager. EndNote is a very good professional reference manager but rather expensive. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparison\\_of\\_reference\\_management\\_software](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparison_of_reference_management_software) describes many alternatives, some of which (for example, JabRef, which can work with Microsoft Word) are open-source, free, software. Zotero is a free plugin for the Firefox browser. You might also consider writing with the free typesetting program L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X, along with its reference management system, BibT<sub>E</sub>X. These are very stable, very solid, very powerful programs; they are available for Windows, Mac OS X, and Linux. This *Syllabus* was prepared using L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X.

**Goal 1.** Students will demonstrate the ability to think critically and creatively.

- 1a. Clearly and accurately summarize and evaluate the facts, presumptions, viewpoints, values, and arguments presented in a text or creative work.
- 1b. Gather and assess relevant information, and apply appropriate cognitive methods in solving problems or answering questions raised in a text or creative work.
- 1c. Construct well-reasoned solutions or conclusions; test and defend conclusions against relevant criteria and standards.
- 1d. Critically analyze one’s own thinking by identifying one’s presumptions, values, and viewpoints as well as problems, inconsistencies, and unanswered questions.
- 1e. Conceive and defend alternative hypotheses and viewpoints; offer and explain reasons for provisionally rejecting or accepting them.

**Goal 3.** Students will demonstrate proficiency in written communication.

- 3e. Write an effective argumentative essay.

### Schedule

We will discuss the following readings more or less during the weeks noted below. Do the reading before class.

Philosophy must be read **actively**. The aim of philosophical writing is to discover the truth—truth about something controversial and hard. **Read slowly**. Sentence by sentence, you must constantly question what you are reading, asking whether you think what the author says is true, and asking whether you think the author’s conclusions follow. Figure out why, why not, take notes, write down what you think (and ask yourself: am I right?). Read with someone else, maybe out loud.

Date	Readings	Due Dates
Jan 28	Introduction; ducks; reasoning	
Jan 30	Plato, <i>Phaedo</i> , 57a-77a, especially: 70d-77a; Dardis, pp.1-9	
Feb 2	<i>Phaedo</i> , 77a-107a, especially: 77a-80d, 85c-86d, 92a-95a, 96a-107a; Dardis pp.10-18	
Feb 4	Aristotle on Blackboard: <i>Physics</i> II.1-3; <i>De Anima</i> II.1; Dardis p.18-22	
Feb 6	Aristotle <i>De Anima</i> II.2,12; Dardis 22-27	
Feb 9	Descartes, from M2, M6; Dardis 29-31	
Feb 11	Princess Elizabeth; Dardis 31-36	
Feb 13	Huxley “Automata”; Dardis 36-42	SP1
Feb 16	<b>President’s Day</b> , no classes	
Feb 18	Lyons, Ch.1	
Feb 20	Lyons, Ch.2, pp.37-54	
Feb 23	Lyons, Ch.2, pp.54-79; Ryle, from <i>The Concept of Mind</i>	
Feb 25	Lyons, Ch.3, pp.79-101	
Feb 27	Lyons, Ch.3, 101-121; Smart, “Sensations and Brain Processes”	SP2
Mar 2	Lyons, Ch.3, 114-128; Churchland, “Eliminative Materialism and the Propositional Attitudes”	
Mar 4	Lyons, Ch.4, 129-150	
Mar 6	Turing, “Computing Machinery and Intelligence”	

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Date	Readings	Due Dates
Mar 9	Lyons, Ch.4, 150-162; Fodor, "The Mind-Body Problem"	
Mar 11	Lyons, Ch.4, 162-174; Searle, "Minds, Brains and Science"	
Mar 13	Lyons, Ch.5, 175-189; Nagel, "What is it like to be a bat?"	SP3
Mar 16	Lyons, Ch.5, 189-207	
Mar 18	Dardis, Ch.4, pp 42-54	
Mar 20	Dardis, Ch.4, pp.55-62; Davidson, "Mental Events"	
Mar 23	Dardis, Ch.5, pp.63-67; selections from Locke's <i>Essay</i>	
Mar 25	Dardis, Ch.5, pp.67-74; Lewis, "New Work for a Theory of Universals"	
Mar 27	Dardis, Ch.5, pp.74-86	SP4
Mar 30	Dardis, Ch.6, pp.87-94; Hume, <i>Enquiry</i> VII	
Apr 1	Dardis, Ch.6, pp.94-103 (*Latham, *Anscombe)	
Apr 3	Dardis, Ch.6, pp.103-112	
April 6–12	<b>Spring Recess</b>	
Apr 13	Dardis, Ch.7, pp.113-121	
Apr 15	Dardis, Ch.7, pp.121-130	
Apr 17	Heil, "Dispositions"	SP5
Apr 20	Dardis, Ch.8, pp.131-137; Horgan, "From ..." pp.555-72	
Apr 22	Dardis, Ch.8, pp.137-151	
Apr 24	Kim, "The Many Problems of Mental Causation"	
Apr 27	Dardis, Ch.9, pp.152-157	
Apr 29	Dardis, Ch.9, pp.157-163	
May 1	Dardis, Ch.9, pp.163-170	
May 4	Dardis, Ch.9, pp.170-175	
May 6		
May 15	Long paper due	Long paper due