

Philosophy 164: Philosophy of Mind

Spring 2011 CRN 24692 Section 01 TR 9:35-11:00 Breslin 0018

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Overview

Your mind is what you think and feel and sense and make decisions with. It's *you*. Lots of things don't have minds: cars, rocks, the rain. Lots of things do: people, dogs, dolphins, gerbils (maybe ...), babies (how old?) ... 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).

Each of us knows that he/she him/herself has a mind by, well, *being* that mind. We know some things about the minds of other people by talking with them and noticing how they act. But we are the only creatures we know of who have language. And we don't have any special reason to think that there is anything non-material, spiritual—a soul—associated with the bodies of animals. So do animals have minds? What would it mean to say that animals have minds? How could we tell whether they have minds?

We'll start by talking about a lovely contemporary short story about a dog. Then we'll look back at Plato's and Aristotle's views about the soul. Plato appears to think that the soul must be distinct from the body, and Aristotle thinks that the soul is the form of a living body, no more different from the body than a shape impressed in wax. Descartes is one of the first modern physicalists, but he argues that minds are essentially non-physical: and that animals don't have them. Quine, Davidson and Bennett are 20th century physicalists (we are no more than the physical stuff of which we are composed) who think of minds in quasi-Aristotelian terms: having a mind is a matter of being disposed to act in a certain way. We'll then spend the second half of the semester reading a sequence of very recent articles on the philosophy of animal minds.

Texts

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

Translated by G.M.A. Grube.

Bennett, J. (1989). *Rationality*. Hackett, Indianapolis. A reprint of the 1964 Routledge edition, with a new preface by the author.

Lurz, R. W., editor (2009). *The Philosophy of Animal Minds*. Cambridge University Press.

Selections from Descartes's works available at <http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/>

Selections from Goonan, Quine, Davidson, and Frisch available on Blackboard.

Requirements

Seven papers: 6 short (2-3 pages) each worth 10% of your grade, and one longer final paper (8-10 pages) worth 30%. Lead class discussion 1 or 2 times. Weekly very short quizzes on our reading,

for the remaining 10%: if you take all of them, you receive an A for this component; for each you don't take, I'll mark down another grade step (one missing = A-, two = B+, etc.).

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 to* (and/or 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. 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 reference style. If you are comfortable with some standard reference format (MLA, APA), use that; if

you don't have one that you are comfortable with yet, pick one, Google it (use the Hofstra Library main web page links to citation style guides. . . .), and learn it cold. Suggestion: use/get a good reference management system for your computer.¹ 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.²

Policies

- All papers must be typed, using standard margins and standard typefaces and fonts.
- 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.
- **Academic dishonesty** 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 4 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.)

¹The 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 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^AT_EX, along with its reference management system, BibTeX. 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^AT_EX.

²I want to thank James Wilkerson for discussion of ideas about how to organize a syllabus.

- **Students with Disabilities:** If you have any documented disability-related concerns that may have an impact upon your performance in this course, please meet with me within the first two weeks of the current semester, so that we can work out the appropriate accommodations on an individualized, as-needed basis after the needs, circumstances and documentation have been evaluated by Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD). SSD is located in 212 Memorial Hall and can be reached at 516-463-7075 or ssd@hofstra.edu.

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):

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	Assignments
Jan 27	Introduction	
Feb 1	Goonan, “Memory Dog”	
Feb 3	Plato, <i>Phaedo</i> , 57a-77a, especially: 70d-77a	
Feb 8	<i>Phaedo</i> , 77a-107a, especially: 77a-80d, 85c-86d, 92a-95a, 96a-107a	
Feb 10	Aristotle, <i>De Anima</i> , II.1,2,12	SP1
Feb 15	Descartes, <i>Meditations</i> 1, 2, 6	
Feb 17	Descartes, selections from Discourse, Obj/repl. #4 (Arnauld)	

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Date	Readings	Assignments
Feb 22	(President's Day)	
Feb 24	Quine, <i>Word and Object</i> , Ch.2, §§1-12	SP2
Mar 1	Frisch on Bees; Bennett on Frisch (Frisch's <i>Bees: Their Vision</i> , ... pp.69-144, on reserve; Bennett's <i>Rationality</i> , Chapters 1-3)	
Mar 3	Bennett, Ch.4-8	
Mar 8	Bennett, Ch.9-12	
Mar 10	Davidson, "Thought and Talk"	SP3
Mar 15	Davidson, "Rational Animals"	
Mar 17	(The rest of the readings are all in Lurz, ed., <i>Philosophy of Animal Minds</i>) Jamieson, "What do animals think?"	
Mar 22	Saidel, "Attributing mental representations to animals"	
Mar 24	Rescorla, "Chrysippus' dog as a case study in non-linguistic cognition"	SP4
Mar 29	Tetzlaff and Rey, "Systematicity and intentional realism in honeybee navigation"	one ¶: idea(s) for final paper
Mar 31	Carruthers, "Invertebrate concepts confront the generality constraint"	
Apr 5	Camp, "A language of baboon thought?"	(meet with me to discuss final paper topics)
Apr 7	McAninch et.al, "Animal communication and neo-expressivism"	SP5
Apr 12	Bermúdez, "Mindreading in the animal kingdom"	Bibliography for final paper
Apr 14	Proust, "The representational basis of brute metacognition: a proposal"	
Apr 19, 21	(Spring recess)	
Apr 26	Gennaro, "Animals, consciousness, and I-thoughts"	
Apr 28	DeGrazia, "Self-awareness in animals"	SP6
May 3	Roberts, "The sophistication of non-human emotion"	
May 5	Sober, "Parsimony and models of animal minds"	2 pp. draft of final paper
May 10	Fitzpatrick, "The primate mindreading controversy: a case study in simplicity and methodology in animal psychology"	
May 17	Long paper due	Long paper due