

Philosophy of Mind
PHI 164 TR 11:10-12:45 Davison 011 crn#24113
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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).

This course on the philosophy of mind divides in two parts. For the first half of the semester we'll discuss the special features of minds and the philosophical problems they raise.

In the second half of the semester, we'll take up the topic of pain. Pain is philosophically troubling for a number of reasons. It is almost definitive of the sensory, qualitative kinds of mental states that make dualism so compelling to so many philosophers. Everyone knows what pain is like, but pain is very difficult to understand. It's not even clear what *kind* of mental state it is: is it a sensation, or an emotion, or a command, or some other kind of mental state? It's not clear how pain can be about something ("I have a toothache" — *in my tooth*). And it turns out that from a medical point of view pain is very difficult to understand: there are many very peculiar pain phenomena for which we are only beginning to develop explanations.

Texts

- Mandik, P. (2014). *This is Philosophy of Mind*. Wiley Blackwell, Malden, MA.
Melzack, R. and Wall, P. (2008). *The Challenge of Pain*. Penguin Books, London, 2nd edition. References updated in 1996; new introduction added in 2008.
Dardis, Anthony. Logic Handout.

Requirements

- (1) 5 short papers, 2-3pp; see "Paper Topics" sheet, each worth 12% of your final grade.
- (2) One longer final paper (8-10 pages) worth 25%.
- (3) You must lead the classroom discussion at least once. (See below.) 10% of your final grade will depend on your presentation(s).
- (4) You must attend 2 talks or similar University events. (Suggestion and example: Dr Anjan Chatterjee will talk on February 5 about his new book *The Aesthetic Brain* at 5pm at the Cultural Center Theatre.) For proof of attendance, write me a paragraph about what you got out of the event. Each event counts for 2.5% of your grade, for a maximum of 5%.

Class structure

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.

I will divide the class into pairs. Each pair will be assigned to a day and a reading. Each pair should meet to discuss the reading beforehand and decide what you plan to do with it. It would be a good idea to meet with me as well.

There are three phases to what you want your presentation to do.

1. Describe the “bottom line” or “take away” conclusion of the reading. This is the main idea or ideas that the author wants us to come to believe.
2. Describe the reasons that the author gives for believing that conclusion.
3. Evaluate the argument. This is the most important phase of the presentation. The Dardis handout on logic is a guide to how to think about this. You will want to have some idea of what *kind* of argument you are discussing, and what the standards for that kind of argument are. The key to evaluation is to ask, “should I believe this? what are the alternatives?” Be skeptical; be imaginative.

And there are two things you **really don’t** want to do:

1. **Don’t read a presentation!** It’s a very good idea to work out what you are going to say beforehand, in writing. But it’s generally a very bad idea to read from a prepared text.
2. **Don’t look at the text!** You must digest the reading and present it from your own point of view. You *do not* want to attempt to present the author’s arguments *from the text*. Your goal isn’t to summarize everything the author says. Your goal is to critically evaluate the overall argument that the author makes. Give yourself plenty of time: you and your partner may well want to consult with me before your presentation, and so you should schedule your time with that in mind.

Reading, writing and argument

As you read, you want to answer the following questions for yourself:

1. What is the conclusion of this argument: what is this author trying to convince us to believe?
2. What are the author’s reasons? Are the author’s reasons *true*, that is, do they say how the world really is?
3. How is the argument supposed to work? The main choices (see the Dardis handout on logic) are: (1) it’s supposed to be deductive (something like the “ $A = B$; $B = C$; therefore $A = C$ ” pattern); (2) it’s supposed to be inductive or statistical (“leading scientists have data showing . . .” or “the Quinnipiac poll shows that voters . . .” patterns); (3) it supposed to be an explanation (“if we assume that the mind is distinct from the body, then we can make sense of the special features of minds”). There are different standards for how good an argument is, depending on what kind it is. What are the relevant standards? Does the argument meet the standards—does it support its conclusion well?

It’s worth keeping in mind, both for our class, for your other classes, and for your life outside the university, that argumentation is always relevant to what you are encountering. Authors, and people in general, think various things—about the world of her writing, in an author’s case, and about the world itself, for the rest of us. What do they think? why do they think that? (There’s always another way to do something [or something else to do], so why did the author do it *that* way?) Answering a “why” question is providing a reason, and once again we have an argument to think about. Second,

you think various things about what you are reading and about the world around you. To make discoveries, and to persuade others that you are right, you have to provide reasons for what you think. There you have more arguments, and more arguments to evaluate.

Your papers will present your thinking about the texts. Your papers will be “critical response” or “critical reflection” papers; they are not primarily for exposition or for conveying information. The best strategy for writing a paper for this class is to describe and evaluate an argument to a conclusion. Since philosophy is about thinking and reasoning about the big picture, most philosophical writing consists in giving reasons to believe some conclusion about the big picture, and showing the reader that they are good reasons. Most academic writing is very similar: it aims to persuade the reader to believe a conclusion, by producing the best set of reasons it can for that conclusion.

Good papers have three features: good mechanics (spelling, grammar); good understanding (accurate and insightful description of the subject matter, in our case, what goes on in a text); good thinking (interesting, insightful, accurate critical response to the text). *Good thinking is by far the most important.* It is easy to hide good thinking with bad writing.

Your papers **must** include at least one bibliographic reference, in the form of a footnote or an endnote. I do not have any preferences about the form of the reference. 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 find yourself using or discussing the ideas of others, for instance ideas that have come up in class from me or from your classmates.² Never assume that just because something seems well-known, that you shouldn’t provide a citation to it.

You’ll be writing two kinds of papers:

- (a) The short papers. You’ll be writing one about every two weeks (see below for due dates). 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.

¹Microsoft Word includes a reference manager. There are alternatives. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparison_of_reference_management_software describes them; some of them (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. EndNote is a very good professional reference manager but rather expensive.

²I want to thank Professor Jennifer Corns for generous advice on philosophy and pain, and James Wilkerson for discussion of ideas about how to organize a syllabus.

Policies

- All papers must be typed, using standard margins and standard typefaces and fonts. Hard copy only; no electronic submissions accepted.
- No late papers accepted.
- Any paper may be rewritten: a rewrite must be turned in by 2 weeks from the original due date.
- 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. Occasionally there may be a reason for you to email me a paper, but you **must** check with me first.
- A paper with no complete bibliographic reference will receive the grade of F.
- Turn off your phone or beeper before class.
- If you must leave class early, please inform me before class starts.
- If you cannot attend class, please inform me.
- 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.
- **Academic dishonesty.** If I have reason to believe that any kind of plagiarism whatsoever has occurred I will request a discussion of the work. (See the *Hofstra Writer's Guide* for a definition of plagiarism. If you are in any doubt, consult with me.) 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**. If there is plagiarism in the final paper, 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. (These policies are in accord with the University's Policy on Academic Honesty as stated in the Hofstra University Bulletin. Procedures for Handling Violations of Academic Honesty by Students at Hofstra University are detailed in Faculty Policy Series #11 (rev. 2004.) for undergraduates.)
- 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 (including things like iPads or smartphones) in class to take notes or for other *class-related* purposes. Two comments:
 1. There is data to show that for some purposes hand written notes are a better learning tool than computer notes: <https://psuf10.wordpress.com/2013/10/04/handwriting-vs-typing-when-taking-notes/>
 2. My goals for you in this class are these. You will: (1) learn about some of the philosophical debates about the mind; (2) think critically about the various arguments, including ones we see in our texts, and also ones that come up as we discuss the texts; (3) write

clearly and critically about these philosophical arguments. I will not be testing you on the fine details of the readings; I am assuming, rather, that you are doing the reading and learning the concepts presented there. So please consider whether you think you will need detailed classroom notes for these purposes.

Schedule

We will discuss the following readings on the dates 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	Topic	Readings	Assignments
Jan 28	Introduction		
Jan 20	Substance Dualism	Mandik 1&2	
Feb 4	Property Dualism	Mandik 3	
Feb 6	Idealism, Solipsism . . .	Mandik 4	
Feb 11	Behaviorism	Mandik 5	
Feb 13	Mind Brain identity	Mandik 6	SP 1
Feb 18	Thinking Machines	Mandik 7	
Feb 20	Functionalism	Mandik 8	
Feb 25	Mental Causation	Mandik 9	
Feb 27	Eliminative materialism	Mandik 10	SP 2
Mar 4	Perception	Mandik 11	
Mar 6	Intentionality	Mandik 13	
Mar 11	Consciousness and qualia	Mandik 14	
Mar 13	What lies after?	Mandik 15	SP 3
Mar 18, 20	(Spring Recess)		
Mar 25	The Puzzle of Pain	Melzack and Wall Part 1	
Mar 27	Theories of Pain	Melzack and Wall Part 3	
Apr 1	Sensation and perception	Tye, “Another look at representationalism about pain”	
Apr 3		Kripke, <i>Naming and Necessity</i> (excerpt)	
Apr 8	Emotion and imperative	Klein, “An imperative theory of pain”	
Apr 10		Bain, “The imperative view of pain”	SP 4
Apr 15	(Class not in session)		
Apr 17	Eliminativism	Dennett, “Why you can’t make a computer that feels pain”	
Apr 22		Hardcastle, Ch. 7 of <i>The Myth of Pain</i>	
Apr 24	Pain in fetuses	Melzack and Wall, <i>Textbook . . .</i>	SP 5

Continued on next page

Date	Topic	Readings	Assignments
Apr 29		Derbyshire “Can fetuses feel pain?”; Glover and Fisk, “Fetal pain: implications for research and practice”	
May 1	Pain in Animals	Melzack and Wall, <i>Textbook . . .</i>	
May 6		Singer, “All animals are equal”; Cohen, “The case for the use of animals in biomedical research”	
May 15			Final paper due (10:30-12:30p)

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.