

Philosophy 2250  
Mind, Knowledge and Language  
Fall 2009

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Instructor: Stefan Linquist

Time: Tues. & Thurs. 2:30-3:50. PM

Email: [linquist@uoguelph.ca](mailto:linquist@uoguelph.ca)

Place: MACK, Room 115

Office Hours: Thursday 1:00-2:00

Course website: [biophilosophy.ca](http://biophilosophy.ca) "teaching"  
(and [CourseLink](#))

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*Course Outline*

This course will investigate various questions raised in the philosophy of mind and cognitive science. In particular, we will focus on the nature and constitution of mind in humans, animals and robots, approaching our subject matter from the perspectives of philosophy, evolutionary psychology, neuroscience, ethology, and artificial intelligence. We will examine the relation between mind and body and between consciousness and cognition. We will also talk about several related philosophical problems about the mind, such as: subjectivity, skepticism about other minds, the relation of language to mind, and the effects of brain disorders on mental life.

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*Course Objectives*

Understand the basic tenets of prevailing theories mind including Cartesian Dualism, Behaviorism, Type identity theory, the Computational Theory of Mind and Evolutionary Psychology.

Students should by the end of the course be able to critically evaluate each theory's position on the following:

- 1) What sorts of mental phenomena must a theory of mind explain?
- 2) What is the relation between mind and body?
- 3) How can one gain knowledge about the mind?
- 4) What is the nature of the self?
- 5) What is the relationship between human and animal minds?

Students should be able to articulate and defend a position on such issues as whether it is possible to construct an intelligent computer, whether non-human animals have beliefs, and whether a science of human consciousness is possible.

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*Grading*

Five short assignments (approximately 2 pages ea.) 25%

Midterm: 25%

Paper (about 8 pages) 25%

Final Exam (cumulative) 25%

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*Readings*

Neil Campbell, [A Brief Introduction to the Philosophy of Mind](#), Broadview Press.

Several journal articles available online and listed below.

## Phil 2250 COURSE OUTLINE (subject to minor modification)

### Week 1- Introduction: What is the philosophy of mind and how is it done?

09/10 Lecture: The five components of a theory of mind and how to analyze them.  
Read: *Philosophy of Mind*, Ch1. "What is the Philosophy of Mind?" (pg 1-14).

#### Part 1: Descartes' theory of Mind.

09/15: Lecture: Cartesian Dualism and the 'commonsense' theory of mind.  
Read: Campbell Chapter 1: "Dualism" (p. 15-33).

09/17: Lecture: Contemporary arguments for Dualism.  
Read: J.P. Moreland "A Contemporary defense of dualism" (online).

09/22: Lecture: Thoughtless brutes? The Cartesian view of animal minds.  
Read: T.H. Huxley, "On the hypothesis that animals are automata" (online).  
**\*\*First assignment due in class\*\***

09/24: Lecture: Problems with the Cartesian theory.  
Read: First part of Campbell, Chapter 2 on Behaviourism (p. 35-50).

#### Part 2: Behaviourism and Mind/Brain Identity theory.

09/29: Lecture: The behaviourist movement in psychology.  
Read: J.B. Watson, "Psychology as a behaviorist views it" (online).

10/01: Lecture: Logical Behaviourism; Problems for Behaviourism.  
Read: Second part of Campbell, Chapter 2: "Problems w. Behaviourism" (51-54)

10/06: Lecture: The rise and fall of of type identity theory.  
Read: Campbell, Ch. 3: Type Identity Theory (57-78).  
**\*\*Second assignment due in class\*\***

#### Part 3: The Computational Theory of Mind.

10/08: Lecture: From Behaviourism to Cognitivism – the emergence of CTM .  
Read: Denise Cummins, "A history of thinking" (online).

10/13: Lecture: Information and information processing.  
Read: A.M. Turing, "Computing Machinery and Intelligence" (online)

10/15: Lecture: Computational systems and Marr's three levels.  
Read: Dawson 1998 The classical view of information processing.

10/20: Lecture: Problems with the computational theory of mind.  
Read: Searle, "Minds, brains and programs" (online).

10/22: A review and question period.  
**\*\*Third assignment due in class\*\***

10/27 **\*\*\*MIDTERM EXAM\*\*\***

10/29 Lecture: Steven Pinker Video: Evolutionary Psychology.  
Read: S. Mitchell, "Can evolution explain how the mind works" (online)  
**Papers assigned.**

11/03 Problems with evolutionary psychology.

### **Part 5: Mind and Belief in Animals**

11/05: Lecture: Do non human animals have beliefs?  
Reading: G Graham, "Mind and belief in animals" (online).

11/10: Lecture: Do non human animals have conscious awareness?  
Reading: TBA  
**\*\*fourth assignment due in class\*\***

11/12: Lecture: The intentional stance.  
Read: D Dennett, "Cognitive ethology: Bargains or Goose Chase?" (online)

### **Part 6: Is a Science of Consciousness possible?**

11/17 - Lecture: The difference between elimination and reduction.  
Read: Campbell, Ch. 6: Eliminative Materialism (123-143).

11/19 : Lecture: Can consciousness be reduced to the brain?  
Read: T Nagel, What's it like to be a bat? (online).

11/24: Lecture: What does scientific reduction really look like?  
Read: Campbell Chapter 9, The Problem of Qualia (189-208).  
Churchland, "Reductions and coevolution in scientific domains" (online).  
**\*\*Fifth assignment due in class\*\***

11/26: Lecture: Scientific optimism (or naivety?) Video of Dan Dennett debate.  
Read: Churchland, ""Nine naysaying arguments" (online).

12/ 01 Lecture: Overview and question period (for final).

## Other important info

### **Class conduct**

The classroom is an open environment where any topic is available for discussion. All participants agree to treat each other with respect and courtesy. As philosophers, we will distinguish our evaluation of the arguments that others are presenting from our evaluation of those individuals as a persons.

### **Plagiarism**

Any attempt to pass off someone else's writing or ideas as one's own will receive an immediate zero on the assignment, a black mark on the student's academic record, and potentially a more severe punishment such as immediate failure of the class, university suspension or expulsion (depending on severity and history).

### **Assignment due dates**

All weekly assignments are due in class at the beginning of class. No late assignments will be accepted without a certified medical excuse.

### **E-mail Communication**

As per university regulations, all students are required to check their <uoguelph.ca> e-mail account regularly: e-mail is the official route of communication between the university and its students.

### **When You Cannot Meet a Course Requirement...**

When you find yourself unable to meet an in-course requirement because of illness or compassionate reasons, please advise the course instructor (or designated person, such as a teaching assistant) in writing, with your name, id#, and e-mail contact. See the undergraduate calendar for information on regulations and procedures for Academic Consideration.

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-ac.shtml>

### **Drop Date**

The last date to drop one-semester Fall 2009 courses, without academic penalty, is **Thursday November 5**. For regulations and procedures for Dropping Courses, see the Undergraduate Calendar.

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-drop.shtml>

### **Copies of out-of-class assignments**

Keep paper and/or other reliable back-up copies of all out-of-class assignments: you may be asked to resubmit work at any time.

### **Academic Misconduct**

The University of Guelph is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity and enjoins all members of the University community – faculty, staff, and students – to be aware of what constitutes academic misconduct and to do as much as possible to prevent academic offences from occurring. The Academic Misconduct Policy is detailed in the Undergraduate Calendar

(<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-amisconduct.shtml>).

### **Recording of Materials**

Presentations in relation to course work—including lectures—cannot be recorded in any electronic media without the permission of the presenter.