

Syllabus, Philosophy 3180
Philosophy of Mind
Winter 2010

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Office MACK 358

Location: MACK 226
Time: Mon, Wed, Fri: 12:30 pm-1:20 pm
Office Hrs.: Wed. 1:30–2:30, Fri. 11:30–12:30

Course description:

This course examines the foundations and prospects of contemporary cognitive science. Specifically, we will consider whether this field leaves something fundamental and important out of its explanation of the mind. For instance some argue that the problem with cognitive science lies in its view of the mind as a computer. We shall consider the commitments of computationalism, the extent to which cognitive scientists depend upon this model, and some recent technological advances that supposedly avoid the problems of classical artificial intelligence. A second objection to cognitive science states that it artificially divorces the mind from its physical and social environment. The second part of this course examines the field of embodied cognition as an alternative to traditional cognitive science. Finally, some argue that cognitive science pays insufficient attention to the brain. In recent years this criticism has been met with the emergence of a new field: cognitive neuroscience. We will consider what this new field involves and whether it is an advance over traditional cognitive science.

Course objectives

- Students will gain a detailed familiarity with foundational issues in cognitive science including the computational theory of mind, Classical AI and parallel processing, embodied cognition and cognitive-neuroscience.
- They will develop and be able to defend a philosophical position on core themes of the course.
- They will acquire foundational skills for conducting independent philosophical research such as argumentative writing and critical analysis.
- They will develop skills for conducting multidisciplinary scholarship.

Reading

Required

1. Andy Clark (1989), *Microcognition: Philosophy, Cognitive Science and Parallel Distributed Processing*. MIT Press (available online through eshelf as an electronic book-see Guelph Library page).
2. Francisco Varela, Evan Thompson & Eleanor Rosch (1993), *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience*. MIT Press. (available through eshelf).
3. Maxwell Bennett, Peter Hacker, Daniel Dennett & John Searle (2009), *Neuroscience and Philosophy: Brain, Mind and Language*. Columbia University Press.

Recommended

Fred Dretske, *Naturalizing the Mind*. MIT Press.

Assignments

Three short writing assignments	15% each
Five Quizzes	5% each
Final	30%

Course Outline

Part 1: Cognitive Science and its Critics.

Week 1 - Microcognition, Chapters 1&2: Classical Cognitivism (an overview).

11/01 Introduction to the course (no reading)
13/01 Clark - p. 1-24.
15/01 Clark- p. 25-35.

Week 2 – Microcognition, Chapters 3 & 4: Folk Psychology, Thought and Context.

18/01: Clark –p. 37-45. First assignment handed out
20/01: Clark – p. 46-59. **Quiz 1**
22/01: Clark –p. 47-74

Week 3 – Microcognition, Chapter 5: Parallel Distributed Processing.

25/01 Clark – p. 83-85
27/01 Clark – p. 84-91
29/01 Clark – p. 92-105

Week 4 – Microcognition, Chapters 6 & 7: Holism, Flexibility and Classical Symbol Systems.

01/02 Clark – p. 107-114 **Quiz 2**
03/02 Clark – p. 114-124
05/02 Clark – p. 127-137

Week 5 – Microcognition, Chapters 8 & 9: Structured Thought.

08/02: Clark - p. 143-151 * First assignment due in class*
10/02: Clark - p. 152-161 _Second assignment handed out
12/02 Clark - p. 162- 176

Winter Break

Part 2: Embodied Cognition

Week 6 – The Embodied Mind, Chapters 1, 2 & 4: *Cognitive Science meets Phenomenology.*

22/02 - p. 15-30
24/02 -p. 31-36 **Quiz #3**
26/02 -p. 59-78

Week 7- The Embodied Mind, Chapters 4 & 6: *Selfless Minds.*

01/03 p. 79- 83
03/03 p.; 105-121
05/03 p. 122 – 132

Week 8- The Embodied Mind, Chapters 7 & 8: *Cartesian Anxiety and Enaction.*

08/03: The Cartesian Anxiety p. 133-143 **Quiz #4**
10/03: p.147-156
12/03 p. 172-184 *Second Assignment due in class*

Week 9 – The Embodied Mind, Chapter 9: *Evolutionary Path Making and Natural Drift.*

15/03: p. 185 – 192

Third assignment handed out

17/03: p. 193 – 204

19/03 p. 205 - 216.

Part 3: Philosophy and Cognitive Neuroscience

Week 10 – Neuroscience and Philosophy, Section 1: The Argument.

22/03: Bennett & Hacker, “The Introduction” (p. 3-33).

24/03: Bennett & Hacker, “Excerpt from Chapter 10” (p. 35-44).

26/03 Bennett & Hacker, “Concluding Remarks” (p. 45- 48).

****Quiz #5****

Week 11 – Neuroscience and Philosophy, Section 2: The Rebuttals.

29/03 Dennett, “Philosophy as naïve anthropology” (p. 74-95).

31/04 Searle, “Putting consciousness back in the brain” (p. 98-124)

02/05 Overflow class.

Week 12 – Neuroscience and Philosophy, Section 3: Reply to Rebuttals.

05/04 Hacker & Robinson, “A reply to critics” (p. 127-146).

Third assignment due in class

07/04 Hacker & Robinson, “A reply to critics” (p. 146 - 162).

09/04 Course summary

22/04 **Final Exam 11:30AM - 01:30PM**

More info on assignments and exams.

Short papers

These assignments should be no longer than 1000 words. Typically these papers will address some argument defended in the readings. A high quality paper will do three things: (1) concisely identify the focal argument, (2) briefly articulate one or more objections to that argument, (3) consider how the author might respond to those objections and (if possible) evaluate that response. They are due at the beginning of class.

Exams

Prior to each exam students will be provided with a list of 15-20 short-answer questions based on the readings and lecture. The examination questions will be drawn from those questions.

Other important stuff

Assignments

All assignments must be submitted in class on the due dates and will not be accepted late without documented or otherwise legitimate justification.

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] in writing, with your name, id#, and e-mail contact. Where possible, this should be done in advance of the missed work or event, but otherwise, just as soon as possible after the due date, and certainly no longer than one week later.

Note: if appropriate documentation of your inability to meet that in-course requirement is necessary, the course instructor, or delegate, will request it of you. Such documentation will rarely be required for course components representing less than 10% of the course grade. Such documentation will be required, however, for Academic Consideration for missed end-of-term work and/or missed final examinations. See the undergraduate calendar for information on regulations and procedures for Academic Consideration.

(<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/co8/c08-ac.shtml>). Also see the BA Counselling Office website (www.uoguelph.ca/baco)

Drop Date The last date to drop one-semester Winter 2010 courses, without academic penalty, is **Friday March 12, 2010 (the 40th day of class)** 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 University of Guelph takes a serious view of academic misconduct, and it is your responsibility as a student to be aware of and to abide by the University's policy. Included in the definition of academic misconduct are such activities as cheating on examinations, plagiarism, misrepresentation, and submitting the same material in two different courses without written permission from the relevant instructors. To better understand your responsibilities, read the Undergraduate Calendar.

(<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c01/index.shtml>) for a statement of Students' Academic Responsibilities; also read the full Academic Misconduct Policy (<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-amisconduct.shtml>). You are also advised to make use of the resources available through the Learning Commons (<http://www.learningcommons.uoguelph.ca/>) and to discuss any questions you may have with your course instructor, TA, or academic counsellor.

Instructors have the right to use software to aid in the detection of plagiarism or copying and to examine students orally on submitted work. For students found guilty of academic misconduct, serious penalties, up to and including suspension or expulsion, can be imposed. Hurried or careless submission of work does not exonerate students of responsibility for ensuring the academic integrity of their work. Similarly, students who find themselves unable to meet course requirements by the deadlines or criteria expected because of medical, psychological or compassionate circumstances should review the university's regulations and procedures for Academic Consideration in the calendar (<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-ac.shtml>) and discuss their situation with the instructor and/or the program counsellor or other academic counsellor as appropriate.