

Philosophy of Mind (Fall 2019)

Professor: Bryce Huebner
Office: 234 New North
Office hours: T 15-17:00, and by
appointment

Course meets:
M & W 11:00 - 12:15 pm
Location: White-Gravenor 409

In this course, we'll examine a wide variety of different questions about what minds are, and about what kinds of things have them (from people, to insects and octopuses). We'll also investigate questions about consciousness, our sense of agency, and mental illness; and, we'll examine questions about what it means to be a "self", to have a "soul", and to be a "person". Finally, over the course of the semester, we'll look at the different ways in which the philosophy of mind is approached across several different philosophical traditions, including traditions that emerged in Europe, North America, India, Western Africa, and Mesoamerica.

Tentative reading schedule

8/28	No reading
9/4	Peter Adamson , Into Thin Air: Avicenna on the Soul (listen; 21:38)
9/9	Rene Descartes on animals Jen McWeeny , Princess Elisabeth & the Mind–Body Problem
9/11	Lars Chittka & Catherine Wilson , Bee brained (3800)
9/16	Kevin Lande , Do you compute? (5100)
9/18	Jenny Judge , Getting in the groove (3900)
9/23	Sy Montgomery , Deep Intellect (4558) Nell Greenfieldboyce , Octopuses Get Strangely Cuddly (854)
9/25	Anil K. Seth , The real problem (3600)
9/30	Akhandadhi Das , Modern technology is akin to the metaphysics of Vedanta (1400)
10/2	Thomas Metzinger , Are you sleepwalking now? (6200)
10/7	Lisa Bortolotti , Confabulation: why telling ourselves stories makes us feel ok (1200) Chris Frith , Our illusory sense of agency has a deeply important social purpose (1500)
10/9	Laura Spinney , The shared past that wasn't (2770)
10/14	NO CLASS: Mid-Semester Holiday
10/16	Sally Davies , Women's minds matter (5800)
10/21	Abebe Birhane , Descartes was wrong: 'a person is a person through other persons' (1300)

10/23	Tanya Luhrmann , When God talks back (watch; 14:04)
10/28	Philip Gerrans & Chris Letheby , Model Hallucinations (3100)
10/30	Elyn Saks , A tale of mental illness from the inside (watch; 14:46)
11/4	Anna Ciaunica & Jane Charlton , When the self slips (2900)
11/6	Lisa Feldman Barrett & John Dunne , Buddhists in love (3700)
11/11	Samir Chopra , The usefulness of dread (3100)
11/13	Nina Strohminger , The self is moral (2600)
11/18	Katie Javanaud , Buddhism and self-deception (3800)
11/20	David Livingstone Smith , A theory of creepiness (3300)
11/25	Marc Bain , The neuroscience of cool (1882) Chelsea Ward , Why your brain hates slowpokes (1885)
12/2	No Class : BH has Jury Duty
12/4	No reading : Discussion of the current science on dreams
12/9	No reading : Discussion of personal identity (optional: Dan Dennett, Where am I?)

Course Requirements:

10%	Ongoing	This will be a discussion-oriented class, and you will be expected to take part in the class discussion.
You must write three short papers over the course of the semester. These papers should be modeled on the short articles that we will be reading over the course of the semester. You can write on any of the issues that we have addressed in class, or you can address a topic that is more suited to your own interests (however, if you chose the latter option, you must clear your topic with me beforehand).		
25%	9/30	Submit a brief paper (max: 1000 words)
25%	10/28	Submit a brief paper (max: 1000 words)
25%	12/2	Submit a brief paper (max: 1000 words)
15%	12/17	At the end of the semester, you must also write a brief narrative detailing what you have learned in the class, as well as what questions you feel have been left unresolved, and what it would take to address them adequately.

Paper deadlines: If you need an extension on a paper, please ask me at least 24 hours before the due date. I will always be willing to give a 48-hour extension (no questions asked). If you need longer than this, you will need to set up an appointment with me so that we can go over your ideas, and set a schedule for finishing the paper. Unless an extension is granted in advance, assignments will be penalized 1/3 of a grade for each day they are late.

Grading Criteria: *Brief papers* will be graded as follows:

1. Presence of a clearly articulated thesis statement (2 pts);
2. Strength of the evidence and arguments that are used to defend this thesis (10 pts);
3. Organization of the argument in defense of this thesis (10 pts);
4. Stylistic clarity (3 pts).

'A' grades will be awarded to papers that *excel* in categories (2) and (3), exhibiting a clear capacity for *doing philosophy*—and 'A-' grades will be awarded where papers excel in one of these categories. 'B' grades will be awarded to papers that are weaker in one of these categories—but satisfactory on both. 'C' grades will be awarded to papers that are weak in both categories; and 'D' grades will only be awarded to papers that are weak in all four categories or that omit one category altogether (e.g., by lacking a thesis statement or lacking any arguments in support of that thesis).

Appealing a grade: You can appeal any grade that you feel does not accurately represent the work you have done. Appeals for re-evaluation must be made in writing, no more than two weeks after your paper is returned, and no sooner than 48 hours after you receive your grade. Requests must provide a compelling argument for raising the grade, but an agreement to re-evaluate a paper is no guarantee of a better grade, and it can result in lower grades if there are more serious problems that were missed on the first reading.

The honor code: The Georgetown University Honor pledge requires you to be honest in your academic endeavors and to hold yourself to the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life. I expect you to be familiar with the letter and the spirit of this pledge; and, I will enforce the Honor Code by reporting any and all suspected cases of academic dishonesty.

Accessibility and diversity: One finds a great deal of diversity in teaching and learning styles in a modern university. These styles may not always mesh in ways that are conducive to the success and wellbeing of everyone in a course. But there are often ways of improving things. I am happy to discuss the structure of this course, and to work with the learning styles people have to the best of my abilities. So please feel free to talk to me in office hours. I sincerely think that every student is entitled to a meaningful and stimulating classroom experience! Disabled students and students on record with the university as requiring particular accommodations, please let me know that this is the case, in confidence, during the first few weeks of the semester—and please take advantage of services provided by the university. Finally, please let me know if you learn during the semester that something would make the classroom accessible.

Mind your manners: Philosophy is best done collectively and collaboratively; however, some of the questions we will be discussing in this class may generate contentious claims, spirited discussions, vehement disagreements, and trenchant criticisms. This is at least part of what doing philosophy is all about. In discussing, disagreeing, criticizing, and arguing with one another, we must make an effort to remain courteous and respectful. I promise to do my best to raise philosophical issues and to start philosophical discussions in ways that are as sensitive as possible to the variety of viewpoints and opinions that we are sure to find among the members of this class. But I will only be able to do this if each of you helps to create an atmosphere where we can develop ideas in a friendly and welcoming environment where we all learn from one

another. Perhaps more importantly, if you want to disagree with someone, or if you want to offer a criticism of their viewpoint, be sure to offer reasons for the approach that you are suggesting. If we reason through things together, we are sure to have a great semester!

Sexual misconduct: As a faculty member and an educator, it is my responsibility to help create a safe learning environment on our campus. Georgetown University and its faculty are committed to supporting survivors of sexual misconduct, including relationship violence and sexual assault. And university policy requires all faculty members to report any disclosures about sexual misconduct to the Title IX Coordinator, whose role is to coordinate the University's response to sexual misconduct. But Georgetown also has a number of fully confidential professional resources who can provide support and assistance to survivors of sexual assault and other forms of sexual misconduct. More information about campus resources and reporting can be found at <http://sexualassault.georgetown.edu>.