

Philosophy of Mind (Fall 2020)

Professor: Bryce Huebner

Course meets: T & TH 2:00 - 3:15 pm

Office hours: W 12:30-2:00 and other times by appointment

In this course, we will examine questions about what minds are. We will also ask what it means to be a "self", to have a "soul", and to be a "person". And we will explore questions about consciousness, the sense of agency, and neurodiversity. Finally, we will look at different ways of approaching the philosophy of mind in different cultural traditions. Our discussions will focus on the specific issues that matter to the students in this class. But since this class will be held virtually, we will all need to contribute to the cultivation of a space where we can have fun and interesting conversations about the weird and wild phenomena that arise in thinking about minds. We will use **Zoom** to carry out synchronous discussions about the things we learn, and we will use the discussion board on **Canvas** for asynchronous discussions.

Reading Schedule

Sept 27 Introductions and conversations about what the philosophy of mind is	
What is a mind?	
Sept 1-3 Rene Descartes on animals ; Jen McWeeny , Princess Elisabeth & the Mind-Body Problem ; Anil K. Seth , Your brain hallucinates your conscious reality (watch: 16:41)	Sept 8-10 Thomas Metzinger , Are you sleepwalking now? (6200); Evan Thompson , A Dream Inside A Locked Room (2869)
Nonhuman minds?	
Sept 15 -17 Sy Montgomery , Deep Intellect (4558); Nell Greenfieldboyce , Octopuses Get Cuddly (854); Lars Chittka & Catherine Wilson , Bee brained (3800)	Sept 22-24 Kristin Andrews & Susana Monsó , Rats are us (3600); Don Ross , The elephant as a person (4900)
Are minds inherently social?	
Sept 29-Oct 1 Kwasi Wiredu , The concept of mind with particular reference to the language and thought of the Akans	Oct 6 -8 Abebe Birhane , Descartes was wrong: 'a person is a person through other persons' (1300); Phia Salter interview on Systemic Racism (listen: 49:00)
Oct 13-15 Sally Davies , Women's minds matter (5800); Pamela Ayo Yetunde , Buddhism in the Age of #BlackLivesMatter	Oct 20-22 Laura Spinney , The shared past that wasn't (2770); Tanya Luhrmann , When God talks back (watch; 14:04)

<p style="text-align: center;">Oct 27-29</p> <p>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); Sue Fletcher-Watson & Catherine Crompton, Understanding Social Cognition in Autism (Watch: 14:39)</p>	
<p>Becoming a self</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Nov 3-5</p> <p>Daniel Dennett, Where am I? (6472); Carolyn Dicey Jennings, I attend therefore I am (3600)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Nov 10-12</p> <p>Katie Javanaud, Buddhism and self-deception (3800); Lisa Feldman Barrett & John Dunne, Buddhists in love (3700)</p>
<p>Diverse kinds of minds?</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Nov 17-19</p> <p>Anna Ciaunica & Jane Charlton, When the self slips (2900); Phillip Gerrans & Chris Letheby, Model Hallucinations</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Dec 1-3</p> <p>Samir Chopra, The usefulness of dread (3100); Elyn Saks, A tale of mental illness from the inside (watch; 14:46)</p>

Accessibility and diversity

There is a great deal of diversity in teaching and learning styles in a modern university; and this diversity is likely to be significantly increased in our current situation. But learning styles might not always mesh in ways that are conducive to the success and wellbeing of everyone in a course. That said, there are often ways of improving things; and I am always happy to discuss the structure of this course, and to work with different learning styles to the best of my ability. So please feel free to talk to me if things are not working out for you. I sincerely think that every student is entitled to a meaningful and stimulating educational experience! Disabled students and students who are on record with the university as requiring particular accommodations should let me know that this is the case, in confidence, during the first few weeks of the semester. Everyone should take advantage of the services that are provided by the university; and you should let me know if you learn that something would make this course more accessible and rewarding for you.

Course Requirements:

10%	<p>You must set up two one-on-one meetings with me. You will not be graded on <i>the content</i> of these meetings, and they can range from 5-25 minutes. This will provide me with an opportunity to learn how you are approaching this course; and it will give you an opportunity to explore some of the questions about the mind that <i>you find most interesting</i>. Your first meeting must occur before 9/10, your second meeting must occur after 11/3.</p>
20%	<p>You must Keep an experiential learning journal. There are many ways of approaching this part of the course. But the guiding insight is that an adequate understanding of your mind requires <i>observing it</i> while you are sitting down, walking, running, drumming, etc. This is not something that most of us are used to doing; so please see the linked document, and we will talk about this more in your first one-on-one meeting.</p>

15%	Attend or watch the weekly Tuesday sessions. These session will focus on the assigned reading; and they will typically take the following form: Orienting lecture (15); breakout discussion (10); full group discussion (10); silent reflection or coffee break (10); reorienting lecture (5); breakout discussion (10); full group discussion (15). The orienting and reorienting lectures will be recorded and posted on canvas; the group discussions will not be recorded. If you cannot attend this session, you must add one new post and two new comments on the weekly discord thread (I will monitor and contribute to this discussion for 24 hours following each class).	
15%	Attend the open ended discussion on Thursday and raise at least one issue that you want to discuss (this can always be done through the chat if that's more comfortable). These discussions will not be recorded, and they will provide space for you to test out ideas and to explore questions that are not directly addressed during the Tuesday sessions. If you cannot attend this session, you must add one new post and two new comments on the weekly discord thread (I will monitor and contribute to the discussion for 24 hours following our scheduled Thursday meeting time). Thursday sessions will be more open-ended, and they can address any questions that have come up in class discussions, any questions or insights that arise as you read for class, or any things that come up as you explore your experiential learning practice. I will always have a question ready to get the discussion started; but we do not need to focus on my questions, as I want this to be a space for you to discuss the things that interest you!	
You must write two short papers , focusing on an issue we discuss in class, or a topic that is more closely related to your own philosophical interests (if you choose the second option, you must clear your topic with me at least 1 week prior to the deadline for the paper).		
20%	10/30	Submit a brief paper (max: 1500 words)
20%	12/17	Submit a brief paper (max: 1500 words)

Deadlines and Grading Criteria and deadlines

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 (8 pts);
3. Organization of the argument in defense of this thesis (8 pts);
4. Stylistic clarity (2 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; 'D' grades will only be awarded to papers that are weak in all four categories or that omit one category altogether.

If you need an extension on these papers, please ask me before the due date. I will always give a 48-hour extension (no questions asked). And if you need longer than this, we can

always set up an appointment to talk about your ideas, and agree upon a timeline and a new deadline. Unless an extension is granted in advance, assignments will be penalized 1/3 of a grade for each day they are late.

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.

Mind your manners

Philosophy is best done collectively and collaboratively; however, some questions we discuss in this class can generate contentious claims, spirited discussions, vehement disagreements, and trenchant criticisms. Since there will be a lot of online engagement in this course, we need to make sure that we are treating one another as co-participants in an attempt to understand how different kinds of minds work. For this to work, our discussions, disagreements, criticisms, and arguments with one another must 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 fun and interesting semester!