

*PHIL 310*  
Mehmet Çakmak

## *Philosophy of Mind*

Spring 2013

We look in the lump of gray matter called brain and see no consciousness in it. Listening to a beautiful symphony, having a toothache, or tasting a ripe apple all have a certain feel that seems to escape any description of the neural system; no matter how complicated this system may be. Knowing how a toothache feels appears to be over and above knowing any physical description of a toothache. All such phenomena seem to be genuinely non-physical. But then, when I go to a dentist because I have toothache, a physical event (the event of going) is having a non-physical cause (having a toothache). That is not something that many scientists today would accept; they believe that every physical event has a physical cause. So there is a pressing problem here, the problem of integrating the mind into a world that science tells us is composed of unthinking matter. It is the so-called mind-body problem: one of the greatest mysteries, and still unresolved. In the first part of this course, we will look at this problem and overview its many offered (re-)solutions until today: mind as different from physical nature (dualism), mind as behavior (behaviorism), mind as the brain (identity theory), mind as a computer (functionalism), mind as not-existing (eliminativism), etc.

There are two properties of mind that present a challenge for many attempts to understand how it fits into a physical universe: being about things (intentionality) and being conscious. We will discuss consciousness throughout the whole course. Intentionality and representation are the key topics that will open up the second part of the course. The second part will be interdisciplinary (we will draw on research in cognitive science, psychology, neurobiology and artificial intelligence) but no knowledge of these disciplines will be required. We will try to answer questions like: Does thinking require a language-like code? If so, can non-linguistic animals think? Is the mind modular? What are artificial neural networks - Can intellectual abilities be explained by using artificial neural networks? Do we explain the behavior of ourselves and of others by using a theory or by simulation?

### **Course Benefits:**

The first part offers an excellent platform for exercise in philosophical argumentation as there is a continuous argumentative dialectic from traditional texts to recent debates. Moreover, as concepts from other fields of philosophy (like metaphysics, epistemology, and philosophy of language) are relevant for the arguments we will study, the students will be introduced to concepts which they can understand easily in other courses, or apply in other contexts.

The second part will demonstrate the relevance of philosophy for related disciplines and vice versa. It may also appeal students of, e.g., computer science,

neuroscience, or mechatronics, who are interested in foundational questions of their disciplines.

And finally, by talking about zombies, immaterial spirits, futuristic computers and robots, fake computers with little people inside, people with color-inverting glasses, Martians who behave like us but have an internal structure very different from ours, brains in vats, or 'swampmen' who are formed by random aggregation of molecules, and asking whether they have thoughts and feelings like us, we will have lots of fun. And when you have fun, you learn easier.

Your final grade will be comprised of:

In-class participation: 10 %

2 response papers to a topic of your choice (max. 2 pages): 40 %

Final Exam: 50 %

The readings may be adjusted according to the class level. The response papers can also be written on other readings after conferring with instructor.

### **Recommended textbooks:**

Ian Ravenscroft, *Philosophy of Mind: A Beginner's Guide* (Oxford, 2005)

Jaegwon Kim, *Philosophy of Mind*, Third Edition (Westview, 2011)

David Braddon-Mitchell & Frank Jackson, *The Philosophy of Mind and Cognition*, Second Edition (Blackwell, 2007)

### **Course Content:**

#### ***Week 1***

Introduction: Puzzles in Philosophy of Mind

#### ***Week 2***

Dualism

*Rene Descartes: Meditations on First Philosophy (Selections from II and VI)*

#### ***Week 3***

Behaviorism

*Gilbert Ryle: Descartes' Myth*

#### ***Week 4***

Identity Theory

*U. T. Place: Is Consciousness a Brain Process?*

#### ***Week 5***

Functionalism

*Hilary Putnam: The Nature of Mental States*

**Week 6**

Eliminativism

*Paul Churchland: Eliminativist Materialism and the Propositional Attitudes*

**Week 7**

The Computational Theory of Mind

*John R. Searle: Is the Brain's Mind a Computer Program?*

**Week 8**

Connectionism and Neural Networks (Churchland)

*Churchland: Matter and Consciousness (p.156-165)*

**Week 9**

Physicalism: Reductive vs. Non-Reductive, A Priori vs. A Posteriori, Supervenience

*Braddon-Mitchell and Jackson: Philosophy of Mind and Cognition (p. 14-27)*

**Week 10**

Naturalizing Mental Content 1

*Jerry Fodor: A theory of Content and Other Essays*

**Week 11**

Naturalizing Mental Content 2 (Putnam)

*Hilary Putnam: The Meaning of "Meaning"*

**Week 12**

Concepts of Consciousness, Phenomenal Qualities (Qualia) and Subjectivity

*Ned Block: On a Confusion About a Function of Consciousness*

**Week 12**

Phenomenal Consciousness: The Modal argument, The Knowledge Argument, The Zombie Argument, The Explanatory Gap Argument

*Frank Jackson: What Mary Didn't Know*

**Week 13**

Selected Topic (Among: Personal Identity, Self, Imagination, Animal Minds, Children's Theory of Mind)

**Week 14**

Final Exam