

Philosophy 193: Other (kinds of) minds

ICC 101

M & W 14:00-15:15

Professor: Bryce Huebner Office: 234 New North

Office hours: **W** 9:00-1100, and by appointment

Philosophers often ask what it means to have a mind, and this has turned out to be a difficult question to answer. Our primary aim in this course will be to evaluate a variety of attempts to explain what it means to have a mind. We will examine the work of philosophers and scientists who have tried to figure out what it means to be a thinking thing; and we will try to figure out what kinds of minds are possessed by entities that are fundamentally different from ourselves. We will conclude by considering the possibility that various social and political factors play a critical role in molding our understanding of other minds - and we will consider the possibility that we collectively do a lot of work policing the boundaries of 'thought' and 'personhood'.

Course goals:

The primary goal of this course is to help you to develop the tools and techniques that will allow you to learn how to do philosophy well. We will focus on strategies for answering difficult philosophical questions and strategies for responding to the arguments offered by others. Over the course of the semester, your abilities to understand and critically analyze difficult arguments should improve; you should also begin to develop and defend your own positions on difficult philosophical issues. Along the way, I will provide you with resources to address theoretical issues that arise across academic disciplines.

Required Texts:

Michel Foucault, *Herculine Barbin*

Temple Grandin, *Thinking in pictures* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996)

Elyn Saks, *The center cannot hold: My Journey through madness*

Wendell Williamson, *Nightmare: A schizophrenia narrative*

Additional PDF documents, which are linked below

Assignments:

Over the course of this semester, you will write two short papers (1000-1500 words; 25% each) and a longer final paper (2000-2500 words; 30%); participation in class will constitute the remainder of your grade (20%). To alleviate potential conflicts with other papers and exams, you can choose to write either on the nature of mind (**Due: 23 September**) or the role of language in thought (**Due: 21 October**); and you can choose to write either on autism (**Due: 4 November**) or schizophrenia (**Due: 18 November**); everyone will write a final paper addressing the forces that shape our understanding of mindedness (**Due: 11 December**)

Grading Criteria:

In general, philosophy papers should be stylistically clear, adequately articulate the claims being defended, and provide evidence and arguments in support of their claims—thereby presenting clear and compelling arguments. An 'A' grade will only be awarded if a paper excels in each category, exhibiting a clear capacity for doing philosophy. Specific grading rubrics will be circulated with each paper assignment, so you will know precisely what must be done to write a successful paper.

Submission of papers:

Papers must always be submitted anonymously, with no identifying information included other than your GUID#. If you include additional identifying information, your paper will not be graded. A wealth of psychological data suggests that subtle, often implicit prejudices can influence the evaluation of a paper. By adopting an anonymous grading strategy, I hope to guarantee as far as possible that grading is carried out in a way that is fair and reasonable. Since names will never appear on your papers, every paper will be graded exclusively on the basis of the words that occur on the page, focusing on the clarity and accuracy of the presentation, and the strength of the evidence you present for your claims.

Late paper and make-up policy:

The deadlines for turning in papers are firm. I give extensions only where there is evidence of illness or a family emergency, which is submitted prior to the due date. Papers are automatically penalized 1/3 of a grade (A- to a B+, B+ to a B, etc.) for each day they are late.

Appealing a grade:

You are welcome to appeal any grade that you do not feel accurately represents your work. Appeals for re-evaluation must be made in writing, and they must provide a compelling argument for re-evaluation. I will do my best to return exams promptly; out of fairness, you will do your best to make appeals for re-evaluation in a timely manner (all such appeals must be made *no more than one week* after your paper is returned, and no sooner than 24 hours after your paper is returned). The agreement to reevaluate can result in three distinct outcomes: 1) raising the grade; 2) lowering the grade; or, 3) making no change to the grade. A reevaluation is no guarantee of a better grade and may even result in a lower grade if there are not compelling reasons for raising your grade.

Use of external resources:

To succeed in this course, you must learn how to read and reason carefully, and you must learn how to recover arguments from difficult texts. You will not have to read anything beyond what is assigned for the course; but best way to develop the skills required to do well may require collaboration and discussion with others. Beyond trying to clarify your thoughts by thinking out-loud in class, you may want to get together in small groups to think through the issues we discuss; alternatively, you might want to *tweet* about your philosophical thoughts, or argue about the texts that you have been reading on Facebook. This is all acceptable and it may be helpful in understanding the difficult issues we will be discussing. People have very different styles of thinking and learning; and you should use whatever resources suit you best in order to develop the skills that you need for succeeding in this class.

Academic honesty:

When you write your papers, you must use the skills you have developed by thinking through the relevant issues on your own. You have all signed the Georgetown University Honor pledge and have agreed 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 both the letter and the spirit of the pledge, and I will enforce the Honor Code by reporting any and all suspected cases of academic dishonesty. The Honor Code applies to all relevant aspects of this course and it is the responsibility of each student to inform herself or himself of

the relevant principles, and to abide by them throughout the semester. Of course, the key to avoiding dire consequences is to think for yourself, and do your own work on your papers. If you have any questions about what the Honor Pledge requires, please do not hesitate to ask me.

The writing center:

The writing center provides one-on-one assistance at various stages of the writing process. All writers, even the most accomplished, can benefit from their assistance on issues as diverse as topic development, organization, and strategies for revising. To make an appointment, see: <http://writingcenter.georgetown.edu>.

Accommodations for students with differing abilities:

If you are on record with the university as requiring special accommodations, please stop by my office and let me know in confidence within the first two weeks of the semester. If you find, during the course of the semester, that special accommodations are required, please bring me the relevant documentation from the university as soon as you acquire it.

Cell Phones and Computers:

Be sure to turn off the ringers on your phones when you come to class; if you forget to do so, and your phone rings, please turn it off immediately. You should also note that computer use in class is likely to have a detrimental effect on retention and integration of the information that we discuss. In every psychological investigation that I am aware of, people who use a pen and paper to take notes outperform those who use computers. That said, you may use your computer for note taking and other purposes consistent with the course (e.g., looking up quotes from the reading); but I would appreciate it if you would have the maturity to refrain from using your computer for non-academic purposes while in the class. Remember, your computer use can be distracting to others and it can create an environment in which it is difficult to learn; so, please be respectful.

Mind your manners:

Philosophy is best done collectively and collaboratively; however, some of the questions we will be discussing 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!

Tentative course schedule:

28 August	(no reading)
	Thinking machines
4 September	Wallace: Consider the Lobster ; Descartes (excerpts)
9-11 September	Turing, " Computing machinery and Intelligence " (§§ 1-3, 6-7) Searle, " Minds, Brains, and programs " (pp.1-5, 10-14)
	Animal minds
16-18 September	Davidson, " Rational animals " Shettleworth, " Clever Animals and Killjoy Explanations "
23-25 September	Penn, Holyoak, & Povenelli, " Darwin's mistake "
	Language and thought
2 October	Saidel, " Attributing mental representations to animals "
7 October	Camp, " A language of Baboon thought? "
9 and 16 October	Jackendoff, " How language helps us to think "
	Autistic minds
21-23 October	Andrews, " Interpreting Autism " Baron-Cohen, " Autism: The E-S theory "
28-30 October	Grandin, <i>Thinking in pictures</i> (Chapters 1, 4, 7-10)
	Schizophrenic minds
4-6 November	Williamson, <i>Nightmare: A schizophrenia narrative</i>
11-13 November	Saks, <i>The center cannot hold</i> (excerpts TBA)
	Policing boundaries and shaping minds
18-20 November	Melville, Bartleby the Scrivener Rosenhan, " On being sane in insane places "
25 November	Film discussion: <i>Gaslight</i>
2-4 December	Foucault, <i>Herculine Barbin</i>