

PHILOSOPHY 491:
PHILOSOPHY OF MIND AND COGNITIVE SCIENCE
Monday and Wednesday 15h30 – 16h45; Walsh 499
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One of the reasons cognitive science is such a land of plenty for philosophers is that so many of its questions—not just the grand bird’s-eye view questions but quite proximal, in-the-lab-now questions—are still ill thought out, prematurely precipitated into forms that deserve critical reevaluation. If philosophy is, as my bumper sticker slogan has it, what you’re doing until you figure out just what questions to ask, then there is a lot of philosophy to be done by cognitive scientists these days (Dennett, TopiCS, 2009)

Our goal in this course is to examine some of the core issues in the philosophy of mind and cognitive science that deserve the sort of critical evaluation that is suggested by Daniel Dennett in this passage. The readings for this course are organized around a pair of question that were first posed by Descartes in the 17th Century. In **Part I**, our primary concern will be to establish a working knowledge of the most important developments in the theory of mental content and mental representation. Our overview of these issues will in no way be complete, but the will help to suggest some ways in which philosophical theories can and should play a critical role in the development of scientific research programs. In **Part II**, we will turn our attention to a set of theoretical issues surrounding free will and moral the nature of moral cognition. Our goal in this section of the class will be to discover some ways in which recent work in the cognitive sciences can help to shape understanding of moral cognition, moral motivation, and responsibility for our actions.

Course Requirements: In this class you will be expected to make consistent contributions to the discussion in class (**30% of your grade**). Philosophy is a skill that develops by *working together* to understand hard philosophical issues; and the issues that we will be discussion will be both difficult and unfamiliar. In addition, you will also be required to submit two short papers (max: 3000 words; abstract max: 150 words). The first paper will address a topic that is covered in Part I of the course (due: 10/21; **30% of your grade**). The second paper will address a methodological or conceptual issue that arises in Part II of the course (due: 12/16; **40% of your grade**). You may also petition to write a single, longer paper (max: 7500 words; abstract max: 300 words) on a topic of your choosing; this will require the submission of a paper proposal (due: 10/21, **10% of your grade**) and a final paper (Due: 12/16; **60% of your grade**)

Grading Criteria: *In general*, a paper that 1) clearly articulates the claims that are being defended, 2) is well organized, 3) relies on strong evidence and arguments, and 4) is stylistically clear—thereby presenting a competent argument—will receive a 'B' grade (a 'B-' will be weaker in one of these areas—but still satisfactory—and a 'B+' will excel in one of these areas). A 'C' grade will be awarded where a paper is weak in one or two of these categories; a 'D' grade will be awarded where a paper is weak in 3 or 4 categories or omits one altogether (e.g., by lacking a thesis or lacking arguments for the truth of that thesis). An 'A' grade is awarded only where a paper excels in each category, exhibiting a clear capacity for *doing philosophy*.

Paper deadlines: All paper deadlines are firm. Late papers will automatically be penalized 1/3 of a grade (A- to a B+, B+ to a B, etc) for each day that they are late.

Appealing a grade: You can always appeal any grade that you feel does not accurately represent the work you have done. All appeals for re-evaluation must be made in writing, no more than two weeks after your paper is returned, and must provide a compelling argument for raising the grade. A re-evaluation is no guarantee of a better grade, and it can even result in a lower grade if you do not offer a compelling case for raising your grade.

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.

Tentative Course reading schedule:

8/31	Introduction
9/7	Descartes, <i>Passions of the Soul</i> (Part I) Descartes' correspondence with Hobbes Descartes' letter to Cavendish
9/12 9/14	Ryle, "Descartes' Myth"; Ryle, "Knowing how and knowing that" (optional) Turing, "Computing machinery and intelligence"
9/19 9/21	Newell & Simon, "Computer Science as Empirical Inquiry" Searle, "Minds, Brains, and programs" Dennett, "The part of cognitive science that is philosophy" (optional)
9/26 9/28	Fodor, "Methodological solipsism considered as research strategy in cognitive science" Millikan, "Biosemantics"; "Pushmi-pullyu representations" (optional)
10/3 10/5	Dennett "True believers" BH at the EPSA
10/12	Marr, <i>Vision</i> (Chapter 1)
10/17 10/19	Churchland, Ramachandran, & Sejnowski, "A critique of pure vision" Akins, "Of sensory systems and the 'aboutness' of mental states"
10/21	PAPER 1 DUE BY 17H00
10/24 10/26	Wegner "Précis of <i>The illusion of conscious will</i> " Dennett, "The self as a responding and responsible artifact"
10/31 11/2	Ainsle, "Précis of Breakdown of Will" Open Peer commentary and reply
11/7 11/9	Schultz, Dayan, & Montague, "A neural substrate of prediction and reward"; Montague & Quartz, "Computational approaches to neural reward and development"; Montague & Berns, "Neural Economics and the biological substrates of valuation"
11/14 11/16	Quartz, "Reason, emotion and decision-making" Railton, "The affective dog and its rational tail"
11/21	Boyer, "Evolutionary Economics of Mental Time Travel"
11/28 11/30	Schacter et al, "Episodic Simulation of Future Events"; De Brigard, "Is memory for remembering?" Sutton, "Remembering"
12/5 12/7	Barrier, "The Psychology of Memory, Extended Cognition, and Socially Distributed Remembering" Kosslyn, "On the Evolution of Human Motivation"
12/16	FINAL PAPER DUE BY 17H00