

Phil 38: Experience and Reality:  
An introduction to the philosophy of mind  
T TH 2:00-3:15

Meets in Caldwell 105

Professor: Bryce Huebner

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Office hours (Caldwell 210c) TH 12:00-2:00 and by appointment

## Course Description:

This course is designed to be an introduction to the philosophical disciplines of metaphysics (which asks questions about what sorts of stuff there is, the nature of this stuff, and even the ultimate nature of reality) and epistemology (which asks questions about how we know things about the world). We'll focus our inquiry on a just one sort of 'stuff': *minds*.

Here's the problem: somebody once told me that a mind is a terrible thing to taste—I've always wondered whether it was true. We'll start by trying to figure out what minds are. Most philosophers and psychologists think that minds just are brains; and we'll do our best to figure out whether they're right. Secondly, we'll ask: how do we know what sorts of critters have minds. Third, we'll try to figure out what sorts of states emotions are. And, finally, we'll return to questions about the nature of mind and we'll examine an argument for the claim that some of your thoughts aren't inside your head. Hopefully, along the way, we'll answer the metaphysical and epistemological questions that will tell us whether a mind *could be* a terrible thing to taste!

## Course Aims and Objectives:

I have three goals in this course:

1. Introduce you to important issues in the philosophy of mind
2. Improve your ability to understand and critically analyze difficult arguments
3. Help you to articulate your own positions on issues in the philosophy of mind

## Course Grading:

Course grades will consist of:

1. Three in class examinations, weighted as follows:
  - Feb 9: 15% of your final grade
  - Mar 9: 20% of your final grade
  - Apr 13: 25% of your final grade
2. A final paper: worth 30% of your final grade
  - Participation in class: worth 10% of your final grade.

For full credit on your participation grade, you are required to submit (by email prior to the class meeting) one question about the reading each day and will also be required to bring a copy of your question to class each day—some of these will be answered in group work (as philosophy is often better done collectively)

***Much of the material we will cover will be difficult; so, close and careful reading will be expected and required!***

## **Honor Code:**

The Honor Code is in effect in this class and all others at the University. I am committed to treating Honor Code violations seriously and urge all students to become familiar with its terms (<http://instrument.unc.edu/>). If you have any questions about the honor code in this course or anything else in this syllabus, please ask.

Please note: this does not entail that you should not work together. Philosophy is (at least often) best done collectively. In this course you are encouraged to work together on understanding the readings and preparing for the exams and papers. However, the work you submit must be completely your own, and where you have received ideas or quotations from others (both inside and outside of the class), you must make the appropriate citation.

## **Required Texts:**

Rosenthal, D (ed). *The nature of mind*. (NOM)

Clark, A. *Being there*. (BT)

Various files to be found on blackboard 'Course Documents' (BB)

## **Tentative Course Reading Schedule:**

Jan 12: Introduction

### **What are minds?**

Jan 17: Dualism – Descartes (Meditation II and VI) **NOM 21-29**

Jan 19: Descartes Myth – Ryle, “*Descartes Myth*” **NOM 51-57**

Jan 24: Behaviorism – Skinner, “The causes of behavior” **BB**

Jan 26: Identity theory – Place, “Is consciousness a brain process?” **BB**

Jan 31: Functionalism – Lewis, “Psychophysical and theoretical identifications” (focus on §1) **NOM 204-209**

Feb 2: Eliminative Materialism: Paul Churchland: “Eliminative materialism and the propositional attitudes” **NOM 601-612 (optional)**

Feb 7: catch-up and review

Feb 9: In class exam

### **Problems for psychological theories of mind:**

Feb 14: Problems for functionalism – Block “Troubles with Functionalism” (selections **BB**)

Feb 16: Jackson, “What Mary didn’t know” **NOM 392-394**

Feb 21: First person consciousness – Nagel, “What it’s like to be a bat” **NOM 422-428**

### **Attributions of mental states to others:**

Feb 23: The rationality approach – Dennett, “True Believers” **NOM 339-350**

Feb 28: Theory-Theory – Gopnik and Wellman, “Why the child's theory of mind really is a theory” **BB**

Mar 2: cont’d

Mar 7: Simulation Theory – Gallese and Goldman “Mirror neurons and the simulation theory of mind-reading” **BB**

Simulation Theory – Gordon and Cruz, “Simulation theory” **BB (optional)**

Mar 9: Take home exam due

### ***Spring Break***

### **What is an emotion?**

Mar 21: Cognitivism – Solomon, “Emotions and Choice” **BB**

Mar 23: Cont’d

Mar 28: Facial expressions – Ekman, “Facial expression and emotion” **BB**

Mar 30: The James-Lange theory – James, “What is an emotion?” **BB**

Apr 4: A new version of the J-L theory – Prinz, “Embodied emotions” **BB**

### **Can a machine think?**

Apr 6: A test – Turing, “Computing machinery and intelligence” (excerpt) **BB**

Apr 11 Does this test work? – Searle, “Minds, Brains, and Programs” (excerpt) **Focus on NOM 509-512**

Apr 13: In class exam

### **Extending our minds:**

Apr 18: The extended mind – Clark, Introduction and Chapter 1 **BT 1-33**

Apr 20: The extended mind – Clark, Chapter 2 **BT 35-51**

Apr 25: The extended mind – Clark, Chapter 3 **BT 53-69**

Apr 27: The extended mind – Clark, Chapter 4 **BT 71-84**

The final paper is due prior to: Tuesday May 9<sup>th</sup> at 8:00 A.M.