

PHIL 451: Philosophy of Mind

Fall 2021

Tuesday & Thursday, 3:30–5pm

Room: [FNH 60](#)

University of British Columbia — Philosophy Dept.

Instructor: [Murat Aydede](#)

Office hours: Thursdays 2:30–3:30pm

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Teaching Assistant: TBA

GRADING:

1. **Weekly (more or less) comprehension quizzes (%30).** There will be 10-11 short quizzes (timed — usually around 10 minutes) that you will take online (using Canvas) — details TBA. The great majority of the questions in these quizzes will be of true-false or multiple-choice variety. The availability of the quizzes will be announced at least 2 days before. These quizzes are one-shot affairs: you'll have only one attempt that you can make during a given period (usually 24 hours) of availability. We'll drop your two worse-performances. Carefully reading the assigned material will usually be sufficient for you to prepare for these quizzes — although attending the lectures will certainly help.
2. **Two short essays (1000 min –1200 max words each; %35 each).** The first one will be on the Mind-Body Problem and is due on TBA. The second can be on either of the remaining two topic groups (see below) and is due on TBA. The specific topics will be announced later. [Here](#) are some guidelines for writing your essays.

The deadlines will be strictly enforced. Those who cannot meet them with legitimate excuses need to contact the instructor or TA before the deadline, where this is not possible, as immediately as possible.

TEXTS (tentative): Articles and auxiliary material will be made electronically available on the Canvas page for the course (see below). In addition:

Background reading for the curious for the Mind-Body Problem: [David Armstrong \(Links to an external site.\): *The Mind-Body Problem: An Opinionated Introduction* \(Links to an external site.\)](#), Westview Press, 1999. (Sections from a few chapters of this will be made available electronically — but copies are not pre-ordered, although the UBC Library copy is put on course reserve.)

Chapter 4 of [Doing Philosophy \(Links to an external site.\)](#), a textbook written by T Schick & Lewis Vaughn. Electronic version is available for purchase through McGraw-Hill's eBookstore. This includes the material on Free-Will and the Problem of Personal Identity.

Please go to <<https://create.mheducation.com/shop/#>> (Canadian version), and search with the serial number '9781308313535' or under my name. You can then purchase it using a credit card (it's about \$25).

Recommended: John Perry (1978). *A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality*. Electronically available [here](#). (Originally published as a Hackett paperback.)

Fred Feldman, *Confrontations with the Reaper*, Oxford UP, 1992, [UBC ONLINE](#)

TOPICS to be covered:

- The Mind-Body Problem (especially the problem of whether conscious subjective experiences can be reductively explained in purely physical or functional terms). This part is on the metaphysical nature of the conscious mind.
- Personal Identity (what makes a person the same person over time). This part is on the metaphysical conditions under which a mind/person continues to persist as numerically the same.
- The nature of death and why it's bad (if it is). This part is concerned on the minds/persons coming to an end -- their ceasing to exist metaphysically.

FORMAT: The reading assignments for the week will be announced a week earlier. I'll use the one class hour to lecture and will try to use the other as discussion — more or less...

READINGS (tentative!) on the Mind-Body Problem for the first 6-7 weeks:

- Philosopher's Tool Box: [Basic concepts and distinctions](#) (PDF file of PowerPoint presentation)
- ["The" Mind-Body Problem](#)
 - For the more curious: Siewert: "[Consciousness and Intentionality](#)" (*Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*) (2016)

Dualism

- [Descartes selections](#) + [Armstrong Chapter 2](#)
- Some useful slides and notes on the Mind-Body Problem: [Cartesian Dualism](#) & [Chisholm's cartoon](#) on positions)

Behaviorism

- [Ryle: Descartes' Myth](#) (1949) + [Armstrong Chapter 5 on Ryle](#) .
 - For the more curious: [Fodor: Criticism of Ryle's behaviorism](#) (selection from his *Language of Thought*, 1975)

Property Dualism and anti-physicalism

- Jackson: [Epiphenomal Qualia](#)(1982)

- Jackson: [What Mary Didn't Know](#)(1986) (==> [PowerPoint slides](#))
- Churchland: [Reply to Jackson](#)(1989)
 - Recommended -- Nagel: [What is it like to be a bat?](#)(1974)
 - Recommended -- Robinson: [Epiphenomenalism \(Links to an external site.\) \(Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy\)](#) (2019)
 - Recommended -- Kirk: [Zombies \(Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy\)](#) (2019)
 - For the more curious -- Jackson: [Finding the Mind in the Natural World](#) (1994)

Reductionist Identity Theory (materialism/physicalism)

- Smart (1959): [Sensations and Brain Processes download](#) (==> [PowerPoint slides](#) on Identity Theory)
- [Armstrong: Chapter 6 on Identity Theory](#)
 - Recommended: [The Mind/Brain Identity Theory](#) by JJC Smart (in [Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#))

Modal Argument against physicalism

- [Braddon-Mitchell & Jackson: Theory of Reference](#)
- [Kripke \(1970/80\): Selections from Naming and Necessity](#) (==> [Notes](#) on Kripke)
 - Recommended: Levine: [Materialism and the Explanatory Gap](#)(1983)

Study/Comprehension questions on the mind-body problem [HERE](#) — helpful for preparing for the quizzes!

Some entries in the [Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#) that may be helpful in understanding the material covered so far:

- [Qualia: The Knowledge Argument](#) by Martine Nida-Rümelin
- [Dualism](#) by Howard Robinson
- [Zombies](#) by Robert Kirk

For the more curious, here are two relatively accessible articles that sum up the state of the art about a certain way of responding to anti-physicalist arguments:

- Aydede & Güzeldere (2001): "[Consciousness, Conceivability Arguments, and Perspectivalism: The Dialectics of the Debate](#)"
- Aydede (2008): "[Are Phenomenal Zombies Really Conceivable?](#)" draft. (Presents the zombie argument and argues that zombies are not positively ideally conceivable).

Personal Identity -- Self as substance

- T Schick & Lewis Vaughn: Chapter 4.1: What are such stuff as dreams are made on - Self as substance
 - [PowerPoint](#)
- T Schick & Lewis Vaughn: Chapter 4.2: Golden memories - Self as psyche
 - Recommended for the subject-matter of personal identity:
 - [Personal Identity \(Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy\)](#) by Olson
 - [Personal Identity and Ethics \(Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy\)](#) by David Shoemaker.

Personal Identity continues -- psychological continuity and the brain theories

- T Schick & Lewis Vaughn: Chapter 4.2: Golden memories - Self as psyche
 - [Powerpoint](#)
 - Recommended: Parfit (1998): "[The Unimportance of Identity](#)"
- T Schick & Lewis Vaughn: Chapter 4.3: You can't step into the same river twice - Self as a process
 - [Powerpoint](#)

Highly recommended reading for the more curious on being persons and their peculiarities:

- David Velleman: *On Being Me* (Princeton UP, 2020, [UBC ONLINE](#))
- John Perry (2010): "[Selves and Self-Concepts](#)" in *Time and Identity* edited by Joseph Keim Campbell, Michael O'Rourke, and Harry S. Silverstein, MIT Press, 2010. [Develops an information-theoretic account of self as a process — quite accessible reading.]

What is it to be dead? Why is death bad?

- Feldman: The Enigma of Death ([Chapter 4](#) of his *Confrontations with the Reaper*, Oxford UP, 1992, [UBC ONLINE](#))
 - [Presentation used in class](#)
- Feldman: Epicurus and the Evil of Death ([Chapter 8](#) of his *Confrontations with the Reaper*, Oxford UP, 1992, [UBC ONLINE](#))
 - [Presentation used in class](#)
 - Recommended for general philosophy of death:
 - Steven Luper (2019): "[Death](#)," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

The Evil of Death continues...

- Feldman: More Puzzles about the Evil of Death ([Chapter 9](#) of his *Confrontations with the Reaper*, Oxford UP, 1992, [UBC ONLINE](#))
 - [Presentation used in class](#)

Recommended:

- T Nagel: [Death](#) (1970)
- B Williams: (1973): [The Makropulos Case: Reflections on the Tedium of Immortality](#)
- JM Fisher (2011): [Why Immortality Is Not So Bad](#)
- Todd May (2009): [DeathLinks to an external site.](#) (The Art of Living Series), Acumen. [UBC Library online link]

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Misconduct: <http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/Vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,54,111,959>