PHIL250 – MINDS AND MACHINES (2023)

Winter 2023, Term 1
Department of Philosophy, University of British Columbia

1. CONTACT

INSTRUCTOR
Name: Dr. Aaron Henry
Office: Over Zoom:

Office Hours: Wed & Fri 1:30-2:30
Lecture Location: BUCH A203. <u>Or</u> you can attend online - without penalty – via Panopto.
Lecture Times: Tues & Thurs 2:00-3:30

Email: aaron.henry@ubc.ca

> **E-mail policy**: E-mails must be sent from your UBC e-mail address and must include the course code (PHIL250) in the subject line. E-mails are for administrative purposes only – questions about course material will be addressed during office hours. I aim to reply to e-mails within one or two business days.

TEACHING ASSISTANT
TBD

2. COURSE

OVERVIEW
This course will be an introduction to philosophical issues concerning the nature of the mind. Our discussion will begin with the 'mind-body problem': the question of how your mind is related to your body. For example, is your mind an immaterial soul that can (at least in principle) survive the death of your body, as René Descartes believed? If not, is your mind nothing more than your *brain*, or perhaps something more like a *computer program* running on the hardware of the brain? If your mind is a computer, does it follow that we can not only *simulate* intelligence artificially but create *genuine* artificial intelligence (or better: *synthetic* intelligence)? And if your mind is entirely physical, how are we to understand the existence of subjective consciousness – i.e., *what it is like for you* to have the mental states that you do (such as the visual experience of red or the emotional experience of joy)? We will conclude by inquiring about the nature of the *self*. What sort of thing are you and what makes you the same person today that you were yesterday (or that you were when you were a child)? Are you your mind? Your body? And what is required for personal survival?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES
A primary objective of any philosophy course is skill development. Some of the skills you will be developing in this course include:
- ability to read, analyze, and critically assess a philosophical text;
- ability to defend your views, both in writing and in conversation.

In addition, you will acquire:
- grasp of some of the central problems and controversies in philosophy of mind and philosophy of cognitive science/artificial intelligence.

EXPECTATIONS
What I expect from you:
- to attend lectures;
- to come to lecture on time and prepared to discuss assigned readings;
- to complete assignments on time and according to the instructions;

- to treat your peers with respect;
- to ask questions and seek help when you don't understand something;
- to take responsibility for your own learning.

What you can expect from me:
- to come prepared for each lecture;
- to promote a positive and stimulating learning environment;
- to provide support throughout the term;
- to give constructive feedback on your written work;
- to treat you with respect;
- to think carefully about your questions and make a serious effort to answer them.

TEXTS
All other readings will be available through the course website (see §4 for details)

3. ASSESSMENT

Biweekly responses	(10% of final)	**Due:** biweekly on Thursdays
Short paper (1,000 words)	(25% of final)	**Due:** October 13th
Long paper (~2,000 words)	(35% of final)	**Due:** December 7th
Final Exam	(30% of final)	**TBD**

The biweekly responses are 'low stakes' written responses to a question concerning an assigned reading which are intended to help you stay on top of the readings, and to help stimulate discussion in Thursday's lectures. A total of 6 will be assigned (on alternating weeks). You only need to respond to <u>5</u> to receive full marks. They will be graded on a pass/fail basis.

4. POLICIES

COURSE WEBSITE
All announcements and course documents will be posted on Canvas. To access this site, go to https://canvas.ubc.ca/and login with your CWLid and password. PHL250H will appear under the "courses" portion of the welcome page, on the left hand side. Click on the link to access our site. You should check this site regularly for updates.

LATENESS
Assignments will be penalized 1/3 a letter grade for each day that they are late. Extensions may be granted if extraordinary circumstances are documented, but students should contact me to request an extension before the due date. Any assignment that is more than 5 days late will not be accepted.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY
Academic integrity is essential to the pursuit of learning and scholarship in a university, and to ensuring that a degree from the University of British Columbia is a strong signal of each student's individual academic achievement. Accordingly, the University treats cases of cheating and plagiarism very seriously. Plagiarism, which is intellectual theft, occurs where an individual submits or presents the oral or written work of another person as his or her own. Scholarship quite properly rests upon examining and referring to the thoughts and writings of others. However, when another person's words (i.e. phrases, sentences, or paragraphs), ideas, or entire works are used, the author must be acknowledged in the text, in footnotes, in endnotes, or in another accepted form of academic citation. Where direct quotations are made, they must be clearly delineated (for example, within quotation marks or separately indented). Failure to provide proper attribution is plagiarism because it represents someone else's work as one's own. Plagiarism should not occur in submitted drafts or final works. A student who seeks assistance from a tutor or other scholastic aids must ensure that the work

submitted is the student's own. Students are responsible for ensuring that any work submitted does not constitute plagiarism. Students who are in any doubt as to what constitutes plagiarism should consult their instructor before handing in any assignments. A link about Academic Misconduct:
http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/Vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,54,111,959

ACCESSIBILITY NEEDS
The University of British Columbia is committed to accessibility. If you have a disability that may interfere with your ability to successfully take this course, then please email me in the first few weeks. You must also register with Access and Diversity, so that they can help provide support (grant extra time on exam, note taker, etc.):
https://students.ubc.ca/about-student-services/access-diversity

5. SUPPORT

ADVICE
The term goes *very* quickly! It's therefore important to keep up with the readings and to attend lectures. If you feel you need additional help with any of the course material, please don't wait to contact me.

INTERNET RESOURCES
Here is a link to information about the University of British Columbia's writing resources:
https://writing.library.ubc.ca/
Here are links to information about how to write a good philosophy paper:
http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html
http://www.public.asu.edu/~dportmor/tips.pdf
http://catpages.nwmissouri.edu/m/rfield/guide.html
Here is a link to information about the 'Cornell' note taking system:
http://lifehacker.com/202418/geek-to-live--take-study+worthy-lecture-notes

6. SCHEDULE

Please note that this schedule may change at the instructor's discretion to suit the pace of the course and the interests of the students. Please also note that all readings are to be read *before the class* that will take place on the date listed.

DATE	TOPIC	READING
Week 1 (Sept 5/7)	Introduction to the course	**Optional:** Amy Kind, "The Mind-Body Problem in the 20th Century"
Week 2 (Sept 12/14)	Substance dualism and the problem of mental causation	René Descartes, Excerpts from *Meditations on first philosophy* (Med VI); Jen McWeeny, "Princess Elisabeth and the mind-body problem"
Week 3 (Sept 19/21)	The rise of physicalism (*a.k.a.*, 'materialism'): Brain-state theory (*a.k.a.*, 'identity theory')	J.J.C. Smart "Sensations and brain processes" (Focus on pp. 141-142 and pp.155-6) **Optional:**
Week 4 (Sept 26/28)	Behaviourism and the Turing Test	Gilbert Ryle, *The concept of mind* (Ch. 1); Dietrich et al., *Great philosophical objections to artificial intelligence* (Ch. 2)

Week 5 (Oct 3/5)	Computational theories of mind: machine functionalism and 'strong' artificial intelligence	Janet Levin, "Functionalism" (§§1-3) Hilary Putnam, "The nature of mental states" (§II-III). **Optional:** Luciano Floridi, "Should we be afraid of AI?" (This essay is short and accessible)
Week 6 (Oct 10) <u>No class on Oct 12th</u>	Troubles for the computationalism: the 'Chinese Room'	John Searle, "Minds, brains and programs" **Optional:** David Cole "The Chinese room" (focus on §4, but you are welcome to read the entire entry)
Week 7 (Oct 17/19)	The Chinese room continued	No new readings
Week 8 (Oct 24/26)	The 'hard' problem: The subjectivity of consciousness vs. the objectivity science	Thomas Nagel, "What is it like to be a bat?" **Optional:** Frank, Gleiser, & Thompson, "The blind spot of science is the neglect of lived experience" (This essay is short and accessible)
Week 9 (Oct 31/Nov 2)	Responding to the hard problem	David Chalmers, "Consciousness and its place in nature" (This piece is long and sometimes technical. Focus on §§1-3, and skip §6)
Week 10 (Nov 16) <u>No class on Nov 14</u>	Survival and personal identity: Mind merges and mind uploads	Susan Schneider, *Artificial you: AI and the future of your mind* (Chapters 5-6)
Week 11 (Nov 21/23)	Survival and personal identity: Merging and uploading minds	No new readings
Week 12 (Nov 28/30)	The ethics of AI	Dietrich et al, *Great philosophical objections to artificial intelligence* (Chapters 8-9)
Week 13 (Dec 5/7)	The ethics of AI continued and exam review	No new readings