

# PHIL250 – MINDS AND MACHINES

Winter 2024, Term 2

Department of Philosophy, University of British Columbia

## 1. CONTACT

### INSTRUCTOR

**Name:** Dr. Aaron Henry

**Lecture Location:** BUCH A202. Lectures will also be livestreamed and recorded via Panopto.

**Lecture Times:** Tues & Thurs 2:00-3:30

**Office:** Over Zoom

**Office Hours:** Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11am-12pm or by appointment

**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. While I aim to reply to student e-mails within one or two business days, please do not hesitate to send a follow-up email if you have not received a reply from me within that time frame.

### TEACHING ASSISTANT

TBA

## 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 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 (and your TA):

- 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 course readings will be available through the course website or electronically through the UBC library system (see §4 for details). We will be drawing throughout the term on the following texts (both of which are available electronically through the UBC library system):

Kind, A. (2020). *Philosophy of Mind: The Basics* (1st ed.). Routledge.  
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315750903>

Montero, B. G. (2022). *Philosophy of Mind: A Very Short Introduction* (1st ed.). Oxford University Press.  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/actrade/9780198809074.001.0001>

## 3. ASSESSMENT

Reflection paper	(15% of final)	Feb 6 <sup>th</sup> , 11:59 PM
Discussion posts	(10% of final)	TBD
Midterm	(25% of final)	Feb 13 <sup>th</sup>
Final paper	(20% of final)	April 8 <sup>th</sup> , 11:59 PM
Final exam	(30% of final)	TBD

### Discussion posts:

There will be a total of 5 discussion threads available over the course of the term. You are welcome (and encouraged!) to post more frequently. To be eligible for full marks, you must write an original post on three separate discussion threads **and** write a reply to another post on three separate discussion threads. If you want a post or reply to be graded, you should state this at the top of the post, including whether it is an original post or a reply to another post. (I recommend you make this clearly visible by writing it in bold at the top by writing **original post for credit** or **response for credit**).

Posts written for credit should be around 300 words; and replies around 200 words. Posts and replies will be graded out of 2 points, with a 2 indicating a thoughtful, well-written post, a 1 indicating an adequate but under-developed post, and 0 indicating an insufficient response.

## 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>

## USE OF GENERATIVE AI (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE) TOOLS

If you make use of generative artificial intelligence tools (e.g., ChatGPT) to complete any course-related work, the generated material must be clearly and correctly indicated, and cited/referenced using an accepted referencing style. Failure to clearly indicate and reference AI-generated material will be reported as academic misconduct. You should consult your instructor if you have any questions about the use of generative AI tools.

## 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 class.

DATE	TOPIC	READING
Jan 7 <sup>th</sup>	Introduction to the mind-body problem	<b>Optional:</b> Kind, pp.1-15 Montero, Preface (pp. xvii-xxi)
Jan 9 <sup>th</sup>	Primer on logic and argumentation	Kind, pp. 15-21
Jan 14 <sup>th</sup>	Cartesian dualism	Kind, pp. 22-39 McWeeny, "Princess Elisabeth and the mind-body problem" <b>Optional:</b> Montero, pp. 3-13
Jan 16 <sup>th</sup>	Animal and machine intelligence: from Descartes to Turing	Kind, pp. 97-107 Montero, pp. 111-114 ("The Turing Test") <b>Optional:</b> Ross, "The elephant as a person" (accessible short essay)
Jan 21 <sup>st</sup>	Behaviourism	Montero, Ch. 2 Gilbert Ryle, <i>The concept of mind</i> (Ch. 1)
Jan 23 <sup>rd</sup>	Brain-state theory ( <i>a.k.a.</i> , 'type identity theory')	Kind, pp. 48-60 (up to 'Eliminative Materialism')
Jan 28 <sup>th</sup>	Brain-state theory ( <i>a.k.a.</i> , 'type identity theory') cont'd	No new readings
Jan 30 <sup>th</sup>	Computational functionalism	Kind, pp. 76-86 <b>Optional:</b> Luciano Floridi, "Should we be afraid of AI?" (short and accessible)
Feb 4 <sup>th</sup>	Computational functionalism cont'd: some theoretical implications: AI and transhumanism	Kind, pp. 125-139 (stop at 'Uploading and personal identity') <b>Optional:</b> Schneider, Ch. 1-2
Feb 6 <sup>th</sup>	Troubles for the computationalism: the 'Chinese Room'	Kind, pp. 107-113 Searle, "Minds, brains and programs" <b>Optional:</b> David Cole "The Chinese room" (focus on §4, but you are welcome to read the entire entry) <b>REFLECTION PAPER DUE</b>
Feb 11 <sup>th</sup>	Troubles for the computationalism: the 'Chinese Room'	No new readings
Feb 13 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Midterm</b>	
Feb 18 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Midterm break - no class</b>	
Feb 20 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Midterm break - no class</b>	
Feb 25 <sup>th</sup>	Naturalizing intentionality	Montero, pp. 54-70
Feb 27 <sup>th</sup>	Naturalizing intentionality cont'd	No new readings
Mar 4 <sup>th</sup>	The 'hard problem' of consciousness: Is physicalism even coherent?	Kind, pp. 64-5; Nagel, "What is it like to be a bat?" <b>Optional:</b> Frank, Gleiser, & Thompson, "The blind spot of science is the neglect of lived experience" (This essay is short and accessible)

Mar 6 <sup>th</sup>	The hard problem cont'd: contemporary anti-physicalist arguments and positions	Kind, pp. 39-47; pp. 63-75; 86-96
Mar 11 <sup>th</sup>	The scientific study of consciousness (I)	TBD
Mar 13 <sup>th</sup>	The scientific study of consciousness (II)	TBD
Mar 18 <sup>th</sup>	Survival and personal identity: Uploading and merging minds	Kind, pp. 139-149 <b>Optional:</b> Schneider, <i>Artificial you: AI and the future of your mind</i> (Chapters 5-6)
Mar 20 <sup>th</sup>	Survival and personal identity: Uploading and merging minds	No new readings
Mar 25 <sup>th</sup>	The ethics of AI (I)	Dietrich et al. Ch. 8 ('Ethical Issues Surrounding AI Applications') <b>Optional:</b> Mitchell
Mar 27 <sup>th</sup>	The ethics of AI (II)	Dietrich et al. Ch. 9 ('Could Embodied AIs be Ethical Agents?')
Apr 1 <sup>st</sup>	The ethics of AI (III)	Whittaker et al., 'Disability, Bias, and AI'
Apr 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Wrap up and exam review	No new readings
Apr 8 <sup>th</sup>	Wrap up and exam review	No new readings <b>FINAL ESSAY DUE</b>