

PHIL 551 Philosophy of Mind
Animal Minds and the Problem of Consciousness

2024-25 Term 2

Evan Thompson

Thursdays 3-6 PM BUCH D324

Please note this syllabus is tentative and could change (particularly the readings for after the mid-term break).

REQUIREMENTS

1. Seminar Attendance is mandatory unless you have a legitimate reason for being absent (in which case you need to communicate this to me). You should have done all the assigned readings for that week prior to the seminar.
2. Attendance at the Philosophy Department Colloquium (Kristin Andrews lecture) on Friday February 8.
3. A total of 10 weekly short discussion papers: no more than 400 words. I must receive the paper by email (evan.thompson@ubc.ca) no later than the Tuesday by 5 PM before Wednesday's seminar. You may be called on to read your paper in class. The aim of this paper is to make a point, raise a question, etc. relevant to that week's readings. These papers will not be graded but I will subtract 5 points from your final grade for any paper not submitted. No paper required for January 8, February 5, and April 2.
4. Final paper: 8000 words maximum. You should think of this paper as modelled on a philosophy journal article. Your paper must include an abstract of 150 words and a list of references prepared according to the submission guidelines for the *Journal of the American Association of Philosophy*: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/journal-of-the-american-philosophical-association/information/author-instructions/preparing-your-materials> You should consult with me as soon as possible about your topic.

READINGS

Readings listed below on the schedule will be available electronically via the link provided or will be available electronically in a Dropbox folder. You will receive the link via email. You may want to order the books by Andrews and Birch from your preferred bookseller.

SCHEDULE

Week 1: January 9

Thomas Nagel, "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?"

Thomas Nagel, "Conceiving the Impossible and the Mind-Body Problem"

Thomas Nagel, "The Psychophysical Nexus"

Week 2: January 16

Kristin Andrews, *The Animal Mind: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Animal Cognition*, second edition. (2020). Introduction, Chapters 1-4.

Week 3: January 23

Jonathan Birch, *The Edge of Sentience*, Parts I & II

Week 4: January 30

Jonathan Birch, *The Edge of Sentience*, Parts III & IV

Week 5: February 6 **Kristin Andrews will attend the class.**

Kristin Andrews, “‘All Animals Are Conscious’: Shifting the Null Hypothesis in Consciousness Science”

Philosophy Department Colloquium by Kristin Andrews, Friday February 8.

Week 6: February 13

Walter Veit, *A Philosophy for the Science of Animal Consciousness*

Week 7: Midterm Break

Week 8: February 27

Kathleen Akins, “A Bat Without Qualities” (1993)

Kathleen Akins, “What Is It Like To Be Boring and Myopic,” (1993)

Andrew Y. Lee, “Objective Phenomenology” (2024)

Week 9: March 6

Jonathan Birch, Simona Ginsburg, and Eva Jablonka, “Unlimited Associative Learning and the Origins of Consciousness: A Primer and Some Predictions”

Suggested:

See the 9 commentaries on this article and authors’ response at:

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10539-020-09772-0>

Week 10: March 13

Peter Godfrey-Smith, “Gradualism and the Evolution of Experience”

Eric Schwitzgebel, “Is There Something It’s Like to Be a Garden Snail?” at

<http://www.faculty.ucr.edu/~eschwitz/SchwitzPapers/Snails-201223.pdf>

Andrew Y. Lee, “Degrees of Consciousness”

Week 11: March 20

Evan Thompson, “Could All Life Be Sentient?”

Anne Sophie Meincke, “The Metaphysics of Living Consciousness: Metabolism, Agency and Purposiveness”

Week 12: March 27

Hans Jonas, “Is God a Mathematician? The Meaning of Metabolism”

Evan Thompson, *Mind in Life*, Chapters Five and Six

Week 13: April 3

Mirko Prokop, “Hans Jonas and the Phenomenological Continuity of Life and Mind”

Peter Godfrey-Smith, “Mind, Matter, and Metabolism”