

PHIL 451: Philosophy of Mind. 3 Credits

Tuesday & Thursday 2:00-3:30pm. LIFE-Floor 2-Room 2202.

Professor Evan Thompson. 604-827-2071. evan.thompson@ubc.ca

Office hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays 12:45-1:45pm

TA:

UBC's Point Grey Campus is located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the xwməθkwəyəm (Musqueam) people. The land it is situated on has always been a place of learning for the Musqueam people, who for millennia have passed on their culture, history, and traditions from one generation to the next on this site.

UBC provides resources to support student learning and to maintain healthy lifestyles but recognizes that sometimes crises arise and so there are additional resources to access including those for survivors of sexual violence. UBC values respect for the person and ideas of all members of the academic community. Harassment and discrimination are not tolerated nor is suppression of academic freedom. UBC provides appropriate accommodation for students with disabilities and for religious observances. UBC values academic honesty and students are expected to acknowledge the ideas generated by others and to uphold the highest academic standards in all of their actions. Details of the policies and how to access support are available on [the UBC Senate website](#).

All materials of this course (course readings, lecture slides, handouts, etc.) are the intellectual property of the course instructor or licensed to be used in this course by the copyright owner. Redistribution of these materials by any means without permission of the copyright holder(s) constitutes a breach of copyright and may lead to academic discipline. No video or audio recording of the classes is allowed unless you ask for and receive my permission.

This course is an advanced introduction to the philosophy of mind. Its objective is to introduce you to a variety of philosophical issues about the nature of the mind, especially issues that arise in connection with scientific research on the brain. The course will focus on the nature of consciousness. What is consciousness and how is it related to the brain, the rest of the body, and the physical world? Can consciousness be explained in physical terms? Can there be a scientific understanding of consciousness or will consciousness remain forever mysterious? Guided by these questions, we will examine consciousness across a wide variety of states, including perception, dreaming, lucid dreaming, deep sleep, psychedelic states and meditation. We will draw from a wide variety of sources, including contemporary philosophy of mind, Indian philosophy, and cognitive science, especially the neuroscience of consciousness, sleep science, and the neuroscience of meditation.

Required Readings

Selected chapters from Evan Thompson, *Waking, Dreaming, Being: Self and Consciousness in Neuroscience, Meditation, and Philosophy*. Available for online reading through the UBC Library. Available for purchase at the UBC Bookstore, amazon.ca, chapters.indigo.ca, iTunes, barnesandnoble.com

All the other readings are available either at Canvas (see the Readings folder in Modules) or online (see the Schedule below for links).

Requirements

- **2 in-class multiple choice + essay-answer midterm tests, each worth 1/3 of your final mark.** These tests will ask you to explain, evaluate, or reflect on basic ideas, concepts, and arguments from the readings and lectures. **NO MAKE UP TESTS WILL BE GIVEN, SO IF YOU MISS A TEST YOUR MARK WILL BE REWEIGHTED. YOU CANNOT MISS MORE THAN**

ONE TEST: IF YOU MISS BOTH TESTS YOU WILL RECEIVE A ZERO GRADE IN EACH ONE OF THEM. Test dates: Oct. 2 & Nov. 13.

- **Final paper worth 1/3 of your final mark.** Instructions for writing the paper will be posted separately at Canvas. **Due Monday December 8 no later than midnight 12am.**

Statement on Plagiarism: Plagiarism is intellectual theft and occurs when an individual submits or presents the oral or written work of another person as their own. Scholarship rests on examining and referring to the thoughts and writings of others. 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. **Using ChatGPT or other AI content generators to generate any portion of your written work counts as plagiarism in this course.** 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. For further information, please review the UBC Calendar Academic regulations for the university policy on cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty (See the UBC Calendar, under "Academic Regulations," and "Student Conduct and Discipline":

<http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,54,0,0.>)

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

PLAGIARISM WILL NOT BE TOLERATED AND WILL RESULT IN AN AUTOMATIC FAILURE OF THE ASSIGNMENT as well as possible further disciplinary action by the University.

Email Policy

The following guidelines apply to email communication during this course:

- I will make every effort to reply to legitimate email inquiries with 24 hours during weekdays but will likely take longer to respond to email during the weekend.
- Each email message should include in the Subject line the course identifier and a clear statement of purpose (e.g., PHIL 451: Question about Test).

SCHEDULE

Week 1: Sept 4. Introduction

Week 2: Sept 9 & 11. What is Consciousness?

Evan Thompson, *Waking, Dreaming, Being*, chapter 1.

Week 3: Sept. 16 & 18. The Hard Problem of Consciousness

David Chalmers, "Facing Up to the Problem of Consciousness," <http://consc.net/papers/facing.html>

Frank Jackson, "What Mary Didn't Know"

https://courses.physics.illinois.edu/phys419/sp2021/Jackson1986_WhatMaryDidntKnow.pdf or

<https://home.csulb.edu/~cwallis/382/readings/482/jackson.mary.didnt.know.1986.pdf>

Thomas Nagel, "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?" [https://www.sas.upenn.edu/~cavitch/pdf-](https://www.sas.upenn.edu/~cavitch/pdf-library/Nagel_Bat.pdf)

[library/Nagel_Bat.pdf](https://www.sas.upenn.edu/~cavitch/pdf-library/Nagel_Bat.pdf) or [https://cutonthebiasworkshop.wordpress.com/wp-](https://cutonthebiasworkshop.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/nagel-1974-what-is-it-like-to-be-a-bat.pdf)

[content/uploads/2011/05/nagel-1974-what-is-it-like-to-be-a-bat.pdf](https://cutonthebiasworkshop.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/nagel-1974-what-is-it-like-to-be-a-bat.pdf)

Week 4: Sept 23 & 25. Neuroscience Theories of Consciousness

Cogitate Consortium et al., "Adversarial Testing of Global Neuronal Workspace and Integrated

Information Theories of Consciousness," <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41586-025-08888-1>

Week 5: Sept 30 & Oct 2. **NO CLASS SEPT 30 (NATIONAL TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION DAY). TEST 1 ON OCT. 2.**

Week 6: Oct. 7 & 9. Production Versus Transmission Theories of Consciousness.

Albert Gidon, Jaan Aru, and Matthew Evan Larkum, "Does Brain Activity Cause Consciousness? A Thought Experiment," <https://journals.plos.org/plosbiology/article?id=10.1371/journal.pbio.3001651>

Aldous Huxley, *The Doors of Perception*. At Canvas or here: [https://archive.org/details/the-doors-of-](https://archive.org/details/the-doors-of-perception-huxley-aldous-1894-1963-1954-new-york-harper-97800608017)

[perception-huxley-aldous-1894-1963-1954-new-york-harper-97800608017](https://archive.org/details/the-doors-of-perception-huxley-aldous-1894-1963-1954-new-york-harper-97800608017)

Recommended:

William James, *Human Immortality: Two Supposed Objections to the Doctrine*. At Canvas or here:

<https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.272137/mode/2up>

Week 7: Oct. 14 & 16. Panpsychism

Galen Strawson, "Realistic Monism: Why Physicalism Entails Panpsychism,"

[https://www.sjsu.edu/people/anand.vaidya/courses/c2/s0/Realistic-Monism---Why-Physicalism-](https://www.sjsu.edu/people/anand.vaidya/courses/c2/s0/Realistic-Monism---Why-Physicalism-Entails-Panpsychism-Galen-Strawson.pdf)
[Entails-Panpsychism-Galen-Strawson.pdf](https://www.sjsu.edu/people/anand.vaidya/courses/c2/s0/Realistic-Monism---Why-Physicalism-Entails-Panpsychism-Galen-Strawson.pdf) or [https://academic.oup.com/book/12822/chapter-](https://academic.oup.com/book/12822/chapter-abstract/163059537?redirectedFrom=fulltext)
[abstract/163059537?redirectedFrom=fulltext](https://academic.oup.com/book/12822/chapter-abstract/163059537?redirectedFrom=fulltext)

Recommended:

Philip Goff, William Seager, and Sean Allen-Hermanson, "Panpsychism"

<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/panpsychism/>

Week 8: Oct 21 & 23. Idealism

Miri Albahari, "Perennial Idealism: A Mystical Solution to the Mind-Body Problem,"

<https://philpapers.org/archive/ALBPIA-4.pdf>

Week 9: Oct 28 & 30. Neurophenomenology and the Cognitive Science of Meditation.

Antoine Lutz et al., "Investigating the Phenomenological Matrix of Mindfulness-Related Practices from a Neurocognitive Perspective," <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/26436313>

Christopher Timmerman et al., "A Neurophenomenological Approach to Non-Ordinary States of Consciousness: Hypnosis, Meditation, and Psychedelics," at

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1364661322002911?dgcid=author#bb0840>

Week 10: Nov. 4 & 6. Dreaming and Lucid Dreaming.

Evan Thompson, *Waking, Dreaming, Being*, chapters 4, 5, and 6.

Week 11: Nov. 11 & 13. MIDTERM BREAK: NO CLASS NOV. 11. TEST 2 ON NOV. 13.

Week 12: Nov. 18 & 20. Dreamless Sleep.

Evan Thompson, "Dreamless Sleep, the Embodied Mind, and Consciousness: The Relevance of a Classical Indian Debate to Cognitive Science," <https://open-mind.net/papers/dreamless-sleep-the-embodied-mind-and-consciousness-the-relevance-of-a-classical-indian-debate-to-cognitive-science>

Jennifer Windt, Tore Nielsen, and Evan Thompson, "Does Consciousness Disappear in Dreamless Sleep?" <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1364661316301528>

Week 13: Nov. 25 & 27. Minimal Phenomenal Experience.

Thomas Metzinger, *The Elephant and the Blind*, Introduction <https://direct.mit.edu/books/oa-monograph/5725/chapter/4604415/Introduction-The-Elephant-and-the-Blind>

Thomas Metzinger, *The Elephant and the Blind*, 34. The Elephant: What is Pure Awareness? <https://direct.mit.edu/books/oa-monograph/5725/chapter/4604483/The-Elephant-What-Is-Pure-Awareness>

Week 14: Dec. 4. The Primacy of Consciousness.

Adam Frank, Marcelo Gleiser, and Evan Thompson, *The Blind Spot: Why Science Cannot Ignore Human Experience*, chapter 8 (at Canvas)