

PHIL 351
PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVES ON COGNITIVE SYSTEMS RESEARCH

Term: Term 1, Winter 2025/26
Meetings: TTh 12:30-1:50pm
Method of Delivery: In person
Venue: CHEM - Floor 1 - C124

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Office hours: Tuesdays 11:15-12:15pm and via Zoom by appt

1. Course description

This course is an advanced introduction to empirically-engaged philosophical work on cognition. Lots of academic fields often do empirical work on cognition (e.g., all of: psychology, linguistics, computer science, cognitive science, and neuroscience). So, we will study work that can variously be categorized as philosophy of psychology, philosophy of cognitive science, and so on. The biggest aim of this course is to spark students to think about various aspects of their mental lives and to do so in a way that is informed by research that is both philosophically incisive and empirically grounded.

Prerequisite: 3 credits selected from any of PHIL 211, 212, 220, 230, 235, 240, 250, 260, or COGS 200

2. Texts

We will just use journal articles and book chapters that will be linked to through Canvas.

3. Course requirements

The marking scheme is:

26.67% Test#1

26.67% Test#2

26.67% Test#3

10% Mini-papers (see below)

10% Attendance (see below)

Tests

There will be a test on Unit 1 on Tuesday, October 14.

There will be a test on Unit 2 on Thursday, November 6.

There will be a test on Unit 3 during the scheduled exam period.

Mini-papers

Five mini-papers (each max. 250 words) are required. These are brief critical discussions of theses or arguments in the assigned readings.

You have some flexibility about when to hand in mini-papers. But this flexibility is only within the following framework:

(1) There are 8 separate topics in the course (see the reading schedule). Each of your mini-papers must be on a different topic. So, for example, you can only write one mini-paper in total on readings for Topic 1 (Topic 1: Are minds just functional systems?).

(2) You must hand in your mini-paper at the start of a class in which we are scheduled to address the course Topic that the reading that your mini-paper is about is part of. So, for example, if you wrote a mini-paper on Ned Block's "Troubles with Functionalism" (which is part of Topic 1 in the course), then you'd need to submit it at the start of one of the classes that is part of Topic 1 - and once we move on to Topic 2, you can no longer submit a mini-paper on a reading from Topic 1.

Each mini-paper is worth 1/5th of the 10% Mini-Papers portion of the course grade. So, if you pass 5 mini-papers, you get the full 10%, and if you only pass 4 mini-papers, you get 8%, and so on.

Mini-papers will not be accepted electronically.

See the Canvas handout on mini-papers for this course for more information about them (e.g., their content, their structure, how they're marked, etc.).

Attendance

The attendance mark is *all or nothing*. The rubric is as follows:

There are 22 classes in the semester (and, additionally, the first ('meet and greet') class of the semester and the two days when in-class tests are held).

- If you attend at least 18 of those 22 classes, you get the 10% attendance mark.
- If you do not attend at least 18 of those 22 classes, you get 0% as your attendance mark.

If any class is cancelled, I will count everyone as attending that class.

4. Academic misconduct

There will be serious repercussions if I believe that you plagiarized in any of the writing assignments. Disciplinary proceedings will commence immediately and as per UBC's prescribed protocols. Make sure that you're familiar with UBC's standards for plagiarism and academic misconduct (<https://vancouver.calendar.ubc.ca/campus-wide-policies-and-regulations/student-conduct-and-discipline/discipline-academic-misconduct>)

5. Feedback

The university will ask for your feedback on this course at the end of the semester. That sort of feedback is important. But it doesn't help me change things on the fly - that is, in ways that will help you, as opposed to helping future students.

So give me feedback: after class, at office hours, via email, via text, whatever. Tell me that I should go faster or slower on certain material, that our discussion of such and such wasn't clear, etc. - or that you think we're going a good speed, our discussion of such and such topic was clear, etc. Either way, feedback is very welcome and encouraged!