Philosophy of Mind (Introductory Level)

Fall 2016

Justin D'Ambrosio

justin.dambrosio@yale.edu

Course Description

This is an introductory course on the Philosophy of Mind. The course will be divided into four sections: (1) metaphysics of the mental, (1) consciousness, (3) intentionality, and (4) identity and agency.

Metaphysics of the Mental This section will cover issues concerning the metaphysics of mental states, such as the following: are mental states identical to physical states? or are they states of a totally different substance? if so, how does this substance interact with the body? Does this distinction rest on a mistake that we can correct by examining how we apply mental terms? Are we confused when we talk about the metaphysics of mind? Are mental states functional states?

Consciousness One major view of what makes the mind distinctive is that it is conscious. This view faces serious objections. But even if this is not the defining feature of the mental, consciousness is still a deeply puzzling feature of mentality. This section will cover several views on the nature of consciousness, along with issues concerning the subjectivity, or "qualitative character" of experience. Is there an irreducibly subjective element to experience? How hard is the problem of consciousness? Do we even know what a theory of consciousness would look like?

Intentionality The other major position on what is distinctive about the mind is that it exhibits intentionality: it represents things. How it comes to represent, though, is not so clear. This section will focus on theories of intentionality. Intentionality is characterized by certain peculiar features, including the ability to represent objects that do not exist. The question of how we manage to represent the non-existent is called the puzzle of non-existence, and it causes problems for other views of how it is that the mind comes to represent.

Identity and Agency Issues concerning the nature of the mind are connected to issues concerning the self, our identities, and our capacities as agents. For instance, is there a substance underlying our properties that we can identify as our "self", or is the self merely a bundle of properties? What makes me the same person that I was yesterday? What differentiates an action from an event, or something *my body* does from something that *I* do?

Course Requirements

Most of our readings will come from the following text:

David Chalmers: *Philosophy of Mind: Classical and Contemporary Readings*, Oxford: Oxford University Press (2002).

Several of the readings are not in this text, and they will be posted online. The readings won't be long, but many may be difficult. You are expected to do them fully and carefully before the class

for which they are listed so we can discuss them during class.

10% of your grade will be class participation. The remaining 90% will be based on the following material:

Short Papers: (60%) Three short papers (3-5 pages), 20% each, on selected topics from the course. I will provide suggestions. The papers are expected to propose and defend a particular view of an issue discussed in class or the readings.

Final Paper: (30%) The final essay (8-10 pages) can be an extension of one of your short papers. Pick a topic in the course that you found interesting and argue for the position that seems true to you, using the course readings as a guide and a resource. We will read a rough draft of the paper and provide comments before you submit the final version.

Course Structure and Readings

Metaphysics of the Mental

1. Introduction
2. Dualism - Descartes: Meditations II and IV (in PoM)
3. Identity Theory - J.J.C. Smart: Sensations and Brain Processes (in PoM)
4. Eliminativism - Paul Churchland: Matter and Consciousness, ch. 2 (online)
5. Functionalism - Hilary Putnam: The Nature of Mental States (in PoM)
6. Behaviorism - Gilbert Ryle: Descartes' Myth (in PoM)
   Optional: David Lewis: Psychophysical and Theoretical Identifications (in PoM)
   Optional: Ned Block: Troubles with Functionalism (in PoM)

Consciousness

7. Thomas Nagel: What Is It Like to Be a Bat? (PoM)
8. Janet Levin: Could Love be like a Heatwave? (online)
9. Dan Dennett: Quining Qualia
10. David Chalmers: Consciousness and its Place in Nature (PoM)
11. Katalin Balog: Conceivability, Possibility, and the Mind-Body Problem (online)
12. Joseph Levine: Materialism and Qualia: The Explanatory Gap (PoM)
13. Berit Brogaard: The Status of Consciousness in Nature (Online)
14. Bernard J. Bears: A Thoroughly Empirical Approach to Consciousness (online)
15. Webb and Graziano: The Attention Schema Theory: a mechanistic account of subjective awareness (online)
16. David M. Rosenthal: Explaining Consciousness (PoM)
    Optional: Sydney Shoemaker: Introspection and Phenomenal Character (PoM)
    Optional: Frank Jackson: Epiphenomenal Qualia (PoM)
    Optional: David Lewis: What Experience Teaches (PoM)

Intentionality

17. Brentano, Franz: *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* (in PoM)
18. Crane, Tim: "Intentionality as the Mark of the Mental" (Online)
19. Jerry Fodor: Psychosemantics, Preface and Ch. 1 (Online)

20. Ruth Millikan: Biosemantics (in PoM)
21. Eleanor Rosch: Principles of Categorization (PoM)
22. Dan Dennett: True Believers: The Intentional Strategy and Why it Works (PoM)
23. Jerry Fodor: Propositional Attitudes (PoM)
24. Paul Churchland: Eliminative Materialism and the Propositional Attitudes (PoM)
25. Lynne Rudder Baker: Cognitive Suicide (online)
26. Hilary Putnam: The Meaning of 'Meaning' (excerpts from PoM)
    Optional: Andy Clark and David Chalmers: The Extended Mind (in PoM)

Agency and Identity

27. John Locke: Essay Concerning Human Understanding (excerpts, online)
28. David Hume: Treatise on Human Nature (excerpts, online)
29. Derek Parfit: Reasons and Persons (excerpts, online)
    Time Permitting: John Hyman: Three Fallacies of Agency (online)
    Time Permitting: Richard Holton: Willing, Wanting, Waiting, Ch. 1 (online)