

PHIL250 – MINDS AND MACHINES (WINTER 2021)

1. CONTACT

INSTRUCTOR

Name: Dr. Aaron Henry

Office: Over Zoom:

<https://ubc.zoom.us/j/62158256457?pwd=aVNqZlRlTU0M3VldrVGRITjhHWU55dz09>

In-person: BUCH E275

Office Hours: Mon. & Wed. 2:30-3:30pm (or by appointment).

Lecture Location: We will meet over Zoom until further notice

(<https://ubc.zoom.us/j/62158256457?pwd=aVNqZlRlTU0M3VldrVGRITjhHWU55dz09>). When in-person classes resume, we will meet in BUCH D218. (Students who wish to attend from home will have the option of doing so without penalty via Lecture Capture.)

Lecture Times: Tues & Thurs 3:30-5:00

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. I aim to reply to e-mails within one or two business days.

TEACHING ASSISTANT

Name: Jelena Markovic

Email: markovj@mail.ubc.ca

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)? In this course, we will ask these and other questions, focusing on both the promise and hurdles confronting the computational theory of mind, including the prospects of a computational theory of subjective consciousness, the relevance of embodiment and know how for intelligence, and the ethical and political significance on artificial intelligence.

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 attend lectures;
- to come to lecture on time and prepared to discuss assigned readings;

- 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:

- 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 other readings will be available through the course website (see §4 for details)

3. ASSESSMENT

Biweekly responses	(10% of final)	Due: biweekly on Thursdays
Short paper (1,000 words)	(20% of final)	Due: Feb 18
Long paper (2,000 words)	(30% of final)	Due: Apr 8
Final Exam	(30% of final)	TBD
Class Participation	(10% of final)	

The biweekly responses are 'low stakes' written responses to a question concerning an assigned reading which are intended to help you stay on top of the readings, and to help stimulate discussion in Thursday's lectures. A total of 6 will be assigned (on alternating weeks). You only need to respond to 5 to receive full marks. They will be graded on a pass/fail basis.

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. PHIL250H 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>

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 students. Please also note that all readings are to be read *before the class* that will take place on the date listed.

DATE	TOPIC	READING
Week 1 (Jan 11/13)	Introduction to the course and the Mind-Body Problem	Optional: Louise Antony, "The mental and the physical"; (This is an advanced introduction to the metaphysical themes of the course. Don't expect to be able to understand all of it!); John Haugeland, <i>Artificial Intelligence: The Very Idea</i> (Chapter 1: The Saga of the Modern Mind); Barbara Montero, "The body problem" (esp. pp.183-188)
Week 2 (Jan 17/ Jan 20)	Substance Dualism and the problem of mental causation	René Descartes, Excerpts from <i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i> (Med. VI); Jen McWeeny, "Princess Elisabeth and the Mind-Body Problem" Optional: Karen Bennett, "Mental causation" (esp. §1);

Week 3 (Jan 25/27)	Nonhuman minds	René Descartes, excerpt from <i>Discourse on Method</i> (“Animals are Machines”); Don Ross, “The elephant as a person” (an accessible recent essay on whether elephants may one day qualify as ‘persons’) Optional: Kristin Andrews, Chapter 3 of <i>The Animal Mind</i> (“Consciousness”) Godfrey-Smith, excerpt from <i>Other Minds: The Octopus, the Sea, and the Deep Origins of Consciousness</i>
Week 4 (Feb 1/3)	The rise of Materialism (<i>a.k.a.</i> Physicalism): the Identity Theory and Logical Behaviourism	J.J.C. Smart “Sensations and Brain Processes” (Note: this paper is difficult. Focus on pp. 141-142); Gilbert Ryle, excerpt from <i>Concept of Mind</i> . Optional: Julia Tanner, “Gilbert Ryle” §6 & §8 (though you are welcome to read the entire entry)
Week 5 (Feb 8/10)	Machine intelligence. ‘Computational’ or ‘Machine Functionalism’	Alan Turing, “Computing machinery and intelligence” Janet Levin, “Functionalism” (§§1-3) Optional: Luciano Floridi, “Should we be afraid of AI?” (An accessible contemporary essay)
Week 6 (Feb 15/17)	Some troubles for the computational theory of mind: the ‘Chinese Room’	John Searle, “Minds, Brains and Programs”; David Cole “The Chinese Room” (focus on §4, but you are welcome to read the entire entry) FIRST PAPER DUE
Week 7 (Feb 22/24)	Reading Week	
Week 8 (Mar 1/3)	Naturalizing intentionality?	Karen Neander, “Teleological Theories of Mental Content: Can Darwin Solve the Problem of Intentionality?” Optional: Kathleen Akins, “Of Sensory Systems and the “Aboutness” of Mental States”
Week 9 (Mar 8/10)	Can the objectivity of scientific explanation be reconciled with the subjectivity of consciousness?	Thomas Nagel, “What is it like to be a Bat?” Optional: Kathleen Akins, “What is it like to be Boring and Myopic?”
Week 10 (Mar15/17)	The ‘frame problem’ for strong AI	Daniel Dennett, “Cognitive Wheels: The Frame Problem for AI” Hubert Dreyfus, excerpt from <i>What Computers Can’t Do</i>
Week 11 (Mar 22/24)	4E Cognitive Science: Embodied, Embedded, Extended, and Enactive	Michael Wheeler, “Cognition in Context: Phenomenology, Situated Robotics and the Frame Problem”; Evan Thompson, excerpt from <i>Mind in Life</i>
Week 12 (Mar 29/31)	The ethics of AI	Amanda Sharkey and Noel Sharkey, “Granny and The Robots - Ethical Issues in Robot Care for the Elderly”
Week 13 (Apr 5/7)	The ethics of AI cont’d	Meredith Whittaker et al., “Disability, Bias, and AI” SECOND PAPER DUE