

Office: 201 East College

Office hours: Tu, W 3-5 and by appointment

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Text: *Philosophy of Mind*, David Chalmers (ed.) 2002. 1st edition. OUP. ISBN: 978-0-19-514581-6
Additional readings will be made available online.

On the course: This course is meant to introduce you to philosophical discussions of minds. We're going to look at discussions surrounding four questions you might ask about minds: how do minds relate to bodies? What are thoughts? What are concepts? And: Can we explain racism and other oppressive forces by appealing to individual psychological features? In making the syllabus, I've chosen discussions that have influenced present-day philosophy of mind and discussions I think you'll find interesting. It's not going to be very easy, though. Minds are weird¹, and many of our attempts to understand them have also been weird. It can be hard to figure out a consistent methodology or principle. Keep in mind that we can talk openly about that.

Learning goals: Most of all, I want you to get better at thinking philosophically; by the end of the course, I'd like you to be comfortable writing and talking philosophically about minds. We're going to get there by practice and repetition. Most of what we read will be philosophy of mind done well—take our readings as giving you not only information about minds and how they work but also about how to think about minds in a way that's productive. The readings are models of good philosophy. Talking to one another and writing will also help us get better at philosophy and more comfortable with philosophy of mind. As you'll see in the assignments, I want you to be talking every class; I'll be listening to hear that you can take up a philosophical position and clarify it, justify its commitments, argue against alternative positions, and acknowledge its shortcomings. As we go, I'll point out philosophical 'moves' and strategies common in philosophy of mind; eventually, I'll want you to use those moves and strategies

¹ For instance, it's unclear how they relate to our brains/bodies. And they seem to have thoughts and concepts 'in' them, but it's also unclear what *these* are. And thinking itself seems to be both more familiar to you than anything else in the world and almost totally mysterious. For the familiar part, think of a zebra. Pretty easy, right? Almost effortless. If someone were to tell you you didn't just think of a zebra, you'd say that no one knows better than you do whether you just thought of a zebra. Your thoughts are more familiar to you than they are to anyone else. OK, but now for the mysterious part: how many stripes does your imagined zebra have? When you try to answer this question, are you counting the stripes on the zebra you'd already thought of, or are you making it up? Mental images feel like they're just pictures, but they don't *act* like pictures. If they did, you could just count the stripes on the zebra I first asked you to imagine.

during class conversation. The point, again, is to get better and more comfortable thinking philosophically about minds.

Graded work:

Class participation	10%
Class presentations	15%
Short summary paper (1 page)	15%
In-Class Panel Discussion Grade	20%
Summary + Focused Commentary paper (2-3 pages)	15%
Critical paper (3-4 pages)	25%

Class participation: The deal is: I think you'll understand the problems, questions, readings, and arguments much better if you're forced to talk to me and to one another about them every time we meet. So this is how I'm forcing you. Plus, it's fun to talk about philosophy. And, you *do* philosophy partly by talking about it. So come to class prepared to listen and speak very carefully, to support us all in our attempts to understand, to be aware of talking too much or too little.

Class contributions will be graded on (a) one's understanding of the discussion topic and its import and (b) the cogency of the reasoning one offers. You won't get credit simply for attending and speaking. Moreover, there's this rule: **if you go three class meetings in a row without talking, your participation grade for the course will be 0.** If it's difficult for you to speak in class, let me know as soon as possible, and we'll arrange to meet during my office hours.

Class presentations: Each student will give at least two presentations this semester²; your grade will be the average of the two grades. The purpose of each presentation is to teach one of the assigned readings to the class: summarize the argument, give some context, maybe offer some criticism, remark on its importance. Your first presentation will be before spring break; your second will be after. We'll make a schedule for your presentations in the first week of class. You should plan to meet with me during office hours to review and discuss at least your first presentation.

Summary paper: Choose an argument from one of the assigned readings and summarize it. I'll expect you to (1) introduce the argument you're summarizing, putting it into context and saying a bit about why it's important and (2) defend each of the premises in the argument. An A paper will (i) present a valid argument, (ii) be written clearly and succinctly, and (iii) accurately represent the argument summarized, which means (a) including all the claims necessary to establish the argument's conclusion and (b) including in the argument only the claims necessary

² If you'd like to do more, let me know and we'll figure it out. If you do more than two, I'll put your two best grades into the calculation.

to establish the conclusion. Grades range from 0-100. Your summary may be on any argument found in our readings, but it must be submitted to me **before midnight on Friday March 4th**.

In-class panel discussion: Throughout the semester, there will be three 'panel discussions' during class, each with **no more than six discussants**. You must sign up for at least one. Each panel will be organized around a question; you'll have to answer it by drawing on the readings, elaborating on them, and responding to what other panelists say. During the discussion, you must (i) present your position to the class, (ii) articulate virtues of your position, and (iii) raise challenges to other positions. You'll be graded on how clearly you present your view, the cogency of your reasoning, and the insights you express during the discussion.

Summary + Focused Commentary paper: this paper begins with a summary like the one in your summary paper. After the summary, you're to comment on the view summarized, either criticizing it or defending it. I'll grade these on the same grounds as the short summary. You may not use the summary from your previous paper. It's due by **midnight on Friday April 15th**.

Critical paper: this should be formatted like the short summary, except that the argument given is your own. They'll be graded on the same grounds as the short summary except that a criterion of *originality* replaces *accuracy*. It is due **before midnight on the class exam day**. It may be written on any topic, but I recommend that you come to office hours and **discuss your topic and argument with me at least once** before submitting the paper for a grade. If you expect an 85 or higher, you should plan to bring a polished draft to office hours at least once before submitting for a grade. There is a model A paper on Moodle.

Late papers: Papers submitted any time after midnight on the due date are late. At each midnight, I'll reduce the grade on the assignment by 5 points. So, if you submit your work at 11:55pm two days after the due date, you'll lose 10 points. If you submit it 10 minutes later, you'll lose 15 points. Use these rules to make rational decisions. For instance, if you think you can improve your paper by 10 points by taking an extra day to write it, it makes sense for you to take that day and hand the paper in late. What I want is for you to write good papers whether they're late or not. However, unless there are special circumstances, **no assignments will be accepted after midnight on the class exam day**.

Accommodating Students with Disabilities

Dickinson College makes reasonable academic accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Students requesting accommodations must make their request and provide appropriate documentation to Disability Services in Biddle House. Because classes change every semester, eligible students must obtain a new accommodation letter from Director Marni Jones every semester and review this letter with their professors so the accommodations can be implemented. The Director of Disability Services is available by appointment to answer

questions and discuss any implementation issues you may have. Disability Services proctoring is managed by Susan Frommer at [717-254-8107](tel:717-254-8107) or proctoring@dickinson.edu. Address general inquiries to Stephanie Anderberg at [717-245-1734](tel:717-245-1734) or e-mail disabilityservices@dickinson.edu.

Academic Violations of the Community standards

In the course, we will follow Dickinson policy for defining, investigating, and responding to academic violations of the Dickinson Community Standards. Find information about the Community Standards here:

http://www.dickinson.edu/info/20273/dean_of_students/867/community_standards

Tentative schedule

Background

M 1/25: Introductions; syllabus; discussion: what are minds? Can computers think?

Reading: this syllabus

R 1/28: Metaphysical, epistemological, and terminological matters

Reading: Philosophy of Mind Glossary (Moodle); Chalmers, "Foundations"

Minds in a Physical World

M 2/1: **Dualism I**

Reading 1: Descartes, "Meditations on First Philosophy" II and VI

R 2/4: **Dualism II**

Reading: Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia and Descartes, *Correspondence* pp. 4-7 (M)

M 2/8: **Behaviorism**

Reading 5: Gilbert Ryle, "Descartes' Myth"

R 2/11: **Identity Theory**

Reading 9: J.J.C. Smart "Sensations and Brain Processes"

M 2/15: **Functionalism I**

Reading 11: Hilary Putnam, "The Nature of Mental States"

R 2/18: **Functionalism II**

Reading 13: David Lewis, "Psychophysical and Theoretical Identifications"

M 2/22: **Consciousness I**

Reading 25: Thomas Nagel, "What is it like to be a bat?"

R 2/25: **Consciousness II**

Reading 32: Saul Kripke, *Naming and Necessity* (excerpt)

M 2/29: Panel Discussion: Are Minds Physical?

Content and Propositional Attitudes

R 3/3: Fred Dretske, "A Recipe for Thought"

Reading 46

M 3/7: Wilfrid Sellars, "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind"

Reading 50

R 3/10: Jerry Fodor, "Propositional Attitudes"

Reading 51

Spring Break!

M 3/21: Daniel Dennett, "True Believers: The Intentional Strategy and Why It Works"

Reading 52

R 3/24: Paul Churchland, "Eliminative Materialism and the Propositional Attitudes"

Reading 53

M 3/28 Panel Discussion: How Should We Explain Intelligent Behavior?

Content and Concepts

R 3/31: SEP "Concepts" <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/concepts/>

M 4/4: Hilary Putnam, "The Meaning of 'Meaning'"

Reading 54

R 4/7: Tyler Burge, "Individualism and the Mental"

Reading 55

M 4/11: David Chalmers, "The Components of Content"

Reading 56

R 4/14: Michael McKinsey, "Anti-Individualism and Privileged Access"

Reading 57

M 4/18: Andy Clark and David Chalmers, "The Extended Mind"

Reading 59

R 4/21: Panel Discussion: What's In a Mind?

Racism in Mind

M 4/25: Machery, Faucher, and Kelly, "On the Alleged Inadequacies of Psychological Explanations of Racism" (Moodle) *The Monist*, 93: 228-254

R 4/28: Gendler, "Alief in Action (and Reaction)" (Moodle)

M 5/2: Haslanger, "What Is (Social) Structural Explanation?" (Moodle)

R 5/5: Lingerin Questions

