Phil 7: Introduction to Philosophy of Mind

MWF 11:30-12:50 over zoom (previously Dodd 167)
Syllabus Summer 2020 A-session (Syllabus subject to revision by the instructor, updated:04/12)
Instructor: Kim Johnston, kimjohnston@ucla.edu
Instructor Office hours: T&W 12:50-1:40 (tentative)
Teaching assistant: Ekin Zeytinoglu, ezeytinoglu@humnet.ucla.edu
Discussion sections: M 1:30-2:20 (1A) & W 10:30-11:20 (1B)
TA Office hours: TBD

Description: The aim of this course is to introduce students to philosophical methodology by way of asking questions about the mind. The questions center around what the mind itself is like and how the mind can causally interact with the world.

This course will be divided into three units. In the first unit we will discuss the mind-body problem and the issue of mental causation. Is the mind part of the body? If it isn't, how does it interact with the body? What kind of theory can make sense of the mind's interaction with the body? In the second, we will discuss cognition and consciousness in turn, as the two central features of the human mind. We will look to the computational theory of mind and see what light it can shed on the issue of human cognition and how mental states can exist as causal entities in the world. We will also see some complications coming from consciousness and whether it is consistent with a physicalist view of the mind. In the final unit we will try to discern what role cognition and consciousness play in human perception and action, including the interesting cases of implicit bias and blindsight.

Course requirements:

Grading Basis:

- 10 % participation. This includes:
  - Turning in an outline for the final paper.
  - Completing course evaluations for section and lecture at the end of the course.
  - Anything else your TA deems appropriate. (Ekin will be in touch about section attendance and participation expectations.)
- 12 % Paper 1 (1-2 pp)
- 18 % Paper 2 (2-3 pp)
- 30 % Final paper (4-6 pp)
- 30 % 10 reading responses

Grading scale: 100-96.7 A+, 96.6-93.3 A, 93.2-90 A-, 89.9-86.7 B+, 86.6-83.3 B, 83.2-80 B-, ... etc.

I am happy to answer administrative questions over email. But, if you have substantive philosophical questions, please come see me in office hours. (Or ask the question in lecture or section.)
Other requirements:
- Check your email!
- Be respectful to your fellow students and your TA.
- Attend lecture if possible (I will be posting detailed instructions on how the zoom lectures will work, but I am currently planning on doing them at the scheduled time. But I will also record them and post them.)
- Do all of the readings before the lecture they are listed under. All readings will be made available through the website.

Papers: In the papers you will be analyzing the arguments of the philosophers we are studying as well as developing arguments of your own. Late papers will be docked 1/3 of a letter grade per day that they are late. If you need an extension, please contact your TA as soon as you possibly can. Please see the website for detailed policies regarding the paper assignments.

Reading responses: The specific nature of the assignments will vary by the type of reading and will be posted a week in advance of the due date (but they will all be about ½ a page). There is an assigned reading response due two hours before every lecture. On most weeks, you are required to do two out of the three assigned reading responses. (The only exceptions are weeks 1 and 2, in which you are required to do one out of the two assigned.) Because you are not required to do all of the assigned reading responses, and because the point of the reading response is to prepare you for lecture and give me a sense of how the class is doing, no late reading responses will be accepted. (To answer a couple FAQ: No, you cannot turn in more reading responses and have us drop the lowest score. No, you cannot do the 10 required reading responses at any time you like: you must do 1 each in weeks 1&2 and 2 each in the other weeks.)

How to succeed in this class:
This class, like all philosophy classes, is not an easy A. In order to do well, you need to spend a lot of time on readings and assignments and attend lecture and section regularly. But this is not enough. To do well in this class, you also have to spend time developing your own views and figuring out the reasons that you hold these views. In short, we are not asking you to memorize the course material, we are asking you to critically engage with it.

Student conduct: You are expected to know and to follow UCLA’s student conduct code, including regulations for academic integrity. (Links to the student code and related materials can be found on the course website.) Briefly: Don’t plagiarize, don’t re-submit work you have already submitted for another class, don’t collaborate with others on assignments (except when I have indicated it is appropriate to do so), and don’t help others do any of these things. In addition, don’t be mean or disrespectful to your classmates or disruptive to the class. (This includes engaging in private conversations during class, interrupting other students when they are speaking, and making demeaning, derogatory or otherwise offensive comments directed towards anyone in the class.)

2Please see the website for a list of helpful university resources.
Course schedule:

Week 1: Introduction to Philosophy and Dualism
- June 22: Introduction
- June 24: Dualism
  - *Meditations* (excerpts), Descartes (1641)
  - *Philosophy of Mind* (excerpts), Jaegwon Kim (2011)
- June 26: Problems with dualism
  - “Correspondence between Princess Elisabeth and Descartes” (1643), excerpts.
  - “Princess Elisabeth and the mind-body problem,” Jen McWeeny (2011)
  - “The causal closure of the physical and naturalism,” David Papineau (2009), excerpts.
  - *Paper 1 prompt available by today*

Week 2: First passes at physicalism
- June 29: Behaviorism
  - *The Concept of Mind* (excerpts), Gilbert Ryle (1949)
  - “Brains and Behavior,” Hilary Putnam (1963)
- July 1: Identity theory
  - “Sensations and Brain Processes,” J.J.C. Smart (1959)
  - *Touching a Nerve: Our Brains, Our Selves* (excerpts), Patricia Churchland (2014)
  - *Paper 1 due July 2nd*
- July 3: No lecture, University holiday

Week 3: Functionalism and the Computational Theory of Mind
- July 6: Functionalism
  - *Philosophy of Mind* (excerpts), Jaegwon Kim (2011)
- July 8: Cognition
  - “Hypothesis on the nature of thought” Kenneth Craik (1943)
- July 10: CTM
  - “Semantic Engines” (excerpts), John Haugeland (1981)
  - Optional: *Computer Models of the Mind* (excerpts), Margaret Boden (1985)
  - *Paper 2 prompt available by today*

Readings subject to change. Changes in reading assignments will be announced in lecture and via the course website. You should think of the assigned readings as finalized when the corresponding reading response assignment is posted. (So, about a week before the corresponding lecture takes place.)
Week 4: Consciousness

- July 13: Introduction to consciousness
  - “Facing up to the problem of consciousness,” David Chalmers (1995)

- July 15: The knowledge argument
  - “Epiphenomenal Qualia” (excerpts), Frank Jackson (1982)
  - “The knowledge argument” Torin Alter (2014)

- July 17: The explanatory gap
  - “What is it Like to be a Bat” by Thomas Nagel (1974)
  - “A Bat without Qualities” by Kathleen Akins (1993)
  - Paper 2 due
  - Final Paper prompts available this weekend

Week 5: Issues for the mechanical mind?

- July 20: Consciousness and Physicalism
  - Online evaluations open TBD

- July 22: What does it mean to be physical??

- July 24: Other limitations of cognitive science
  - Final Paper outlines due

Week 6: Mental causation revisited

- July 27 Mental causation
  - “From Perception to Action,” José Luis Bermúdez (2005)
  - Online course evals are due TBD

- July 29: Unconscious cognition
  - “Uncanny Sight in the blind” Beatrice de Gelder (2010)
  - Blindsight (excerpts), Banaji and Greenwald (2013)
  - “Decision making” (excerpts), LeBoeuf and Shafir (2012)

- July 31: Wrapping up and TBD
  - Reading TBD
  - Final Paper due

Accessibility: Students needing accommodations based on a disability should contact CAE ASAP (but at least within the first two weeks of the term if possible) as reasonable notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. Also feel free to contact me directly if you require special accommodations due to learning disabilities, religious practices, physical requirements, medical needs, issues with the translation to online learning, or any other reasons.

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4 Information can be found here: www.cae.ucla.edu