

PHIL 3400: Mind, Language and Reality

Professor: Dr. Dustin Stokes
Section: PHIL3400 Sec 001
Lectures M/W 10:45-11:35 CTIHB101
Discussion** F 10:45-11:35 CTIHB101

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Office Hours: Mon 2:30-4:00/or by appointment
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**Discussions will be held on some but not all Fridays. See schedule below.

Course description

Here are a few (largely) uncontroversial observations: we are, each of us, persons and, no surprise, persons with minds and bodies. And, so it seems to us, what goes on in our mind (and how we use language to express it) somehow corresponds, even if roughly, to what goes on in reality. This is a course on metaphysical issues that concern these simple observations. The questions addressed will be as follows.

1) What are we as persons and how does this relate to body and/or mind?

In ordinary, common sense terms, we each think of ourselves as individuals: as unique persons with unique features. But what precisely is essential to us as persons? Surely neither my haircut nor my particular weight at this moment are essential to me: either feature could change and *I* would still be here! Nor do any one of my thoughts seem essential: I could have different beliefs, desires, and other thoughts about politics or hockey or food, and still, it seems, be the person that I am. So what is it that makes me, me? And what is it that must persist through time for me to survive? These are some of the traditional philosophical questions about *personal identity*.

2) How do mind and body relate?

This is the general question that Descartes grappled with in the form of the mind/body problem, and it remains a challenge that philosophers and cognitive scientists confront today. We should be careful, however, not to bias the question right from the start: perhaps we don't need 'the' body, as in a human body or brain, to get mind. Instead we might, as the tradition of machine functionalism and artificial intelligence suggests, think that we can get mind out of *some* body, and that body may just as well be made out of silicon or cake or LEGOs rather than flesh and blood. We will explore some ways that philosophers have approached these and like issues.

3) How does language correspond to reality?

The final component will be a snapshot of the philosophy of language, and will connect some of the previous work that we will have done on mind and reality. Any speaker of any language is familiar with, well, language: words, sentences, expressions, etc. But upon even brief inspection, it turns out that there are a number of challenging questions to ask about the nature of language. Some of the questions we will encounter are these: What is the *role* of language in our lives, and does this tell us anything about what language is? What is the relationship between language and the mind? Between language and (objects in) the world? What is the nature of meaning?

Course materials

Perry, J. *Personal Identity*, Second Edition, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008

All other papers will be made available online: on the CANVAS course website.

Note also that the course will generally be administered through CANVAS: lecture slides/notes, essay assignments, announcements, and grades will all be posted here, and written work will be submitted here.

Assignments/Requirements:

5%	Participation	
25%	Short paper 1	DUE FRI 9/29 (Prompts assigned 9/22)
30%	Short paper 2	DUE FRI 11/17 (Prompts assigned 11/10)
40%	Final exam	Thurs Dec 14th, 10:30AM-12:30PM

The short papers might also be thought of as take-home exams. You will be given a short list of prompts, from which you will choose and respond to one. The prompts will be made available on CANVAS, and the papers are to be submitted one week later via CANVAS (see dates above), **by 6:00PM**. Your responses should be concise and to the point, and should be approximately 750-1250 words. (Note: the second short paper is weighted slightly more than the first, since you will receive feedback on the first that hopefully allows you to improve on the second.)

The participation component is mostly composed of participation in discussion group sessions, held in class (held on some but not all Fridays; see schedule below).

The final exam will be comprehensive and essay-style, but like the short papers, you will have choices between questions. More details later.

General:

This is a writing intensive course. All of the work/examinations will be written. Your papers will be graded not only on content, but also on grammar, writing mechanics, style, etc. The University writing centre can be found online here:

<http://writingcenter.utah.edu/>

I also recommend this for writing philosophy papers:

<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>

Plagiarism and academic dishonesty of any kind will be treated with zero tolerance. It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the university guidelines and policies on academic integrity, see the Student Code, section V (“Student Academic Conduct”), Part B (“Academic Misconduct”), online here:
<http://www.regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-400.html>

Late work/exams are allowed only with the submission of an official Medical Certificate or a letter from your registrar (or other university authority). **Unexcused late work will NOT be accepted.** No exceptions.

The Americans with Disabilities Act: The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in this class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Olpin Union Building, (801) 581-5020. CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. All written information in this course can be made available in an alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability Services.

Student conduct: Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender (which includes sexual orientation and gender identity/expression) is a civil rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, color, religion, age, status as a person with a disability, veteran's status or genetic information. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you are encouraged to report it to the Title IX Coordinator in the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, 135 Park Building, 801- 581-8365, or the Office of the Dean of Students, 270 Union Building, 801-581-7066. For support and confidential consultation, contact the Center for Student Wellness, 426 SSB, 801-581-7776. To report to the police, contact the Department of Public Safety, 801-585- 2677(COPS).

The Student Code for the University of Utah can be found at:

<http://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-400.php>

(Tentative) Reading/discussion schedule:

(P) Readings in Perry, *Personal Identity*

All other readings available in pdf on course Canvas website

Mon 8/21 *Course introduction*

PERSONAL IDENTITY, BODY, AND MIND

Wed 8/23 *Introduction to the metaphysics of personal identity*

Perry, 'The problem of personal identity' (P)

Dennett, 'Where am I?' at:

<http://www.newbanner.com/SecHumSCM/WhereAmI.html>

Fri 8/25 *Metaphysics of identity cont. & discussion*

Mon 8/28 **NO CLASS**

Wed 8/30 *Psychological continuity*

Locke, 'Of identity and diversity' (P)

Fri 9/1 *Psychological continuity continued & discussion*

Mon 9/4 **Labor day-NO CLASS**

Wed 9/6 *Criticisms of psychological continuity*

Reid, 'Of Identity', 'Of Mr. Locke's account of our personal identity' (P)

Fri 9/8 *Criticisms of psychological continuity cont. & discussion*

Mon 9/11 *Eliminating personal identity*

Hume, 'Our Idea of Identity', 'Of personal identity' (P)

Wed 9/13 *Eliminating personal identity*

Parfit, 'Personal Identity' (P)

Fri 9/15 **NO CLASS**

Mon 9/18 *Body and brain*

Nagel, T. 'Brain bisection and the unity of consciousness' (P)

Wed 9/20 *Body and brain*

Olson, E. 'An argument for animalism'

Fri 9/22 *Concluding discussion on personal identity unit*

MIND AND BODY

- Mon 9/25** *Introduction to the mind/body problem and consciousness*
Wed 9/27 *Descartes: A dualist solution*
Descartes, excerpts from *The Meditations*
Fri 9/29 NO CLASS

- Mon 10/2** *Descartes: A dualist solution cont.*
Wed 10/4 *Critiques of Cartesian dualism*
Ryle, 'Descartes' Myth'
Fri 10/6 *Beginning Physicalist solutions: Behaviorism*
Heil, 'Behaviorism'

- Mon 10/9** **FALL BREAK**
Wed 10/11 **FALL BREAK**
Fri 10/13 **FALL BREAK**

- Mon 10/16** *Physicalism: Behaviorism and its critics*
Putnam, 'Brains and Behavior'
Wed 10/18 *Physicalism: Identity theory*
Identity theory: Smart, 'Sensations and brain processes'
Fri 10/20 NO CLASS

- Mon 10/23** *Physicalism: Identity theory and its critics (Towards functionalism)*
Putnam, 'The Nature of Mental States'
Wed 10/25 *Functionalism*
Heil, 'Functionalism'
Fri 10/27 *Functionalism cont. & discussion*

- Mon 10/30** *Functionalism and its critics*
Searle, 'Minds, Brains, and Programs'
Wed 11/1 *Functionalism and its critics cont.*
Fri 11/3 NO CLASS

- Mon 11/6** *Qualia and the hard problem of consciousness*
Nagel, 'What is it like to be a bat?'
Wed 11/8 *Qualia and consciousness continued*
Chalmers, 'The Puzzle of Conscious Experience'
Fri 11/10 *Concluding discussion on mind/body unit*

LANGUAGE AND REALITY

- Mon 11/13** *Introduction and Locke on language and meaning*
Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book III, Ch. 1 &2 --
-any copy of this text will do; or, for a modern "translation" online:
<http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/lo3.html>
Wed 11/15 *Locke on language and meaning cont.*
Fri 11/17 *Frege: sense and reference*
Frege, 'Über Sinn und Bedeutung' (Translated as 'On Sense and Reference')

Mon 11/20 Frege: sense and reference cont.
Wed 11/22 Frege: sense and reference cont.
Fri 11/24 **THANKSGIVING BREAK-NO CLASS**

Mon 11/27 *Natural kind terms and reality*
Kripke, *Naming and Necessity*, Lecture III
<https://academiaanalitica.files.wordpress.com/2016/10/kripke-saul-a-naming-and-necessity-cambridge-harvard-university-press-1981.pdf>
Putnam, 'Meaning and reference'
Wed 11/29 *Natural kind terms and reality cont.*
Fri 12/1 *Concluding discussion on language and reality unit*

Mon 12/4 Course wrap up
Wed 12/6 **NO CLASS**

Resources:

Nearly all of the readings will be primary sources: professional philosophy papers not intended for beginners. Needless to say, much of this material will be challenging. You might find some of the following resources helpful.

For an introductory text on personal identity, try Noonan, H. *Personal Identity* (Routledge 2003). For introductory texts on philosophy of mind, try Kim, J., *Philosophy of Mind*, Second Edition (Westview Press: 2005) or Heil, J., *Philosophy of Mind: A Contemporary Introduction* (Routledge: 2004). For introductory texts on philosophy of language, try W. Lycan, *Philosophy of Language: A contemporary introduction* (Routledge 2008) or *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Language*, by Michael Morris (Cambridge University Press).

For general philosophy resources, I suggest both *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, ed. Audi, R. (1999) and *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, ed. Blackburn, S. (1994). Online, try the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy at <http://plato.stanford.edu/>