

Phil 317: Philosophy of Mind

Fall 2001

Class meeting time: T R 2:00pm-3:15pm
Class location: Welles 132
E-mail: Liu@geneseo.edu
Telephone: 245-5231 (O)

Instructor: JeeLoo Liu
Office hours: M W 10am– 12pm
or by appointment
Office: Welles 103

Texts: 1. Jaegwon Kim, *Philosophy of Mind* [Westview Press]
2. David Rosenthal (ed.), *The Nature of Mind* [Oxford University Press]
3. Heil & Mele (eds.), *Mental Causation* [Oxford University Press]

Course Description: This course is designed to present contemporary philosophical approaches to the nature of mind. Philosophy of Mind, as it is now viewed as an area that grew out of traditional metaphysics, is a new field that prospers rapidly in the past fifty years. In the first half of this course, we will do a survey of the development of this field, and introduce the various topics that philosophers of mind have been working on. Theories such as logical behaviorism, the mind-brain identity theories, functionalism, reductionism and nonreductive physicalism will be explained and analyzed. In the second half of this course, we will focus on one particular problem in the philosophy of mind: mental causation. The issue is how our thoughts can cause our behavior if every causal work is done on the physical level. Reading assignments for each session are generally around 20 pages, and they require careful reading and hard thinking. The course will be conducted in the lecture/discussion format. In the second half of the semester, students will also be given a chance to present course materials in class.

Grading:

Mid-term exam	20 %
Final exam	20 %
Weekly homework (2 pages each)	20 %
1 final paper (8-10 pages)	20 %
Presentation	10 %
Active class participation	10 %

General Policies:

1. To succeed in this course, you should keep pace with the syllabus. Your regular attendance is strongly emphasized, and you are also expected to finish the reading assignments prior to each class.
2. All written assignments must be typed, double-spaced, and free of spelling errors.
3. The final paper is due on **December 10**. A one-page outline of your main thesis is due on **December 2**. **A 1/2 grade deduction will be made for each day delayed.** You are free to choose your paper topics as long as they are related to the reading materials. You are also encouraged to discuss your paper topic with me. It is strongly recommended that you start working on your paper as early as possible.
4. Homework must be handed in **on the assigned date and in person**. Each homework essay should comprise both an explanation and an evaluation of the author's view. **Do the best you can even when you find the article too difficult to summarize.** Homework will be graded.

In the final calculation, I will dismiss the two (out of ten) pieces of homework with the lowest grades.

5. Each student's presentation takes about 30 minutes. This is a chance for students to develop their ability to organize and present course materials.
6. To receive a final grade for the course, all assignments must be completed.

Syllabus

<u>Date</u>	<u>Content of discussion</u>	<u>Assignments for this class</u>
T 8/28	Introduction	None
R 8/30	What Is the Philosophy of Mind?	Read Kim, Chap. 1
T 9/4	Behaviorism	Read Kim, Chap. 2
R 9/6	Hilary Putnam: Brains and Behavior	Read Rosenthal pp. 151-159 Homework #1: How does Putnam criticize logical behaviorism? (Can you give his argument?)
T 9/11	The Mind-Brain Identity Theory	Read Kim, Chap. 3
R 9/13	J. J. C. Smart: Sensations and Brain Processes	Read Rosenthal pp. 169-175 Homework #2: How does Smart defend the thesis that sensations are nothing but brain processes? (Explain some of his replies that you deem to be the most successful.)
T 9/18	Donald Davidson: Mental Events	Read Rosenthal pp. 247-256
R 9/20	Davidson (cont'd)	Homework #3: Give your evaluation of the type identity theory and the token identity theory.
T 9/25	Mind As A Computer: Functionalism	Read Kim, Chap. 4
R 9/27	Hilary Putnam: The Nature of Mental States	Read Rosenthal pp. 197-203 Homework #4: How does Putnam specify pain functionally? Do you think this analysis exhausts the meaning of 'pain'?
T 10/2	Ned Block: Troubles with Functionalism	Read Rosenthal pp. 211-227
R 10/4	Block (cont'd)	Homework #5: In your assessment, is functionalism the final answer to the mind/body problem? Do you agree with Block's criticisms?
T 10/9	No Class (Fall Break)	

R	10/11	Mind As A Causal Structure: Causal-Theoretical Functionalism	Read Kim, Chap. 5 Homework #6: How is causal-theoretical functionalism different from machine functionalism?
T	10/16	Mid-term Exam	
R	10/18	Introduction: What Is Reduction?	None
T	10/23	Reductive and Nonreductive Physicalism	Read Kim, Chap. 9
R	10/25	Frank Jackson: What Mary Didn't Know	Read Rosenthal pp. 392-394
T	10/30	Thomas Nagel: What Is It Like to Be a Bat?	Read Rosenthal pp. 422-427 Homework #7: Is Nagel right in saying that only sufficiently similar beings can understand each other's point of view? Give his reasons and your critique.
R	11/1	Sidney Shoemaker: Functionalism and Qualia	Read Rosenthal pp. 395-405
T	11/6	Mental Causation	Read Kim, Chap. 6
R	11/8	Jaegwon Kim: Epiphenomenal and Supervenient Causation	Read Rosenthal pp. 257-265 Homework #8: What does Kim mean by 'epiphenomenal causation' and 'supervenient causation'? Does he think that our thoughts do cause our behavior? Explain his view and give your critique.
T	11/13	Donald Davidson: Thinking Causes	Read <i>Mental Causation</i> , pp. 3-17
R	11/15	Jaegwon Kim: Can Supervenience and 'Non-Strict Laws' Save Anomalous Monism?	Read <i>Mental Causation</i> , pp. 19-26
T	11/20	Tyler Burge: Mind-Body Causation and Explanatory Practice	Read <i>Mental Causation</i> , pp. 97-120
R	11/22	No Class (Thanksgiving Vacation)	
T	11/27	Fred Dretske: Mental Events as Structuring Causes of Behavior	Read <i>Mental Causation</i> , pp. 121-136

- R 11/29** Jennifer Hornsby: Agency and Causal Explanation Read *Mental Causation*, pp. 162-185
[One-page outline of your final paper due]
- T 12/4** Robert Van Gulick: Who's In Charge Here? Read *Mental Causation*, pp. 233-256
- R 12/6** **Review; Conclusion**
- M 12/10** **Final paper due [hand in the paper before noon]**

FINAL EXAM: December 18 (Tuesday) 12:00 - 3:00 PM