

Phil 490: Seminar in Contemporary Philosophy
Consciousness and the Self

Class meeting time: Tue 4:00 – 6:45 pm
Classroom: Hum 326B
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Office hours: T R 1:00 – 2:30 pm
 T 3:00 - 4:00 pm
 or by appointment

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Text: *Consciousness and the Self: Readers for Seminar in Contemporary Philosophy*
 (ed.) JeeLoo Liu (available at CopyCo.)



Course Description:

This course will be designed as a preparation for the upcoming Philosophy Symposium. The focus of the 39th Philosophy Annual Symposium (2009) is a topic of the highest interest for both philosophers and non-philosophers alike: *Consciousness and the Self*. We all have conscious experiences during our waking moments, and we all seem to be conscious of ourselves as the host of all our experiences. The capacity with which one perceives what goes on in one's own mind is called "introspection." Through introspection, we come to know what we believe or how we feel, and we are seldom wrong in our self-knowledge. Philosophers have been confident in the apparent reliability of our self-knowledge. Some have argued that we have *infallible* knowledge of the content of our thought; some have called our introspection a "privileged access" to our own minds in that it is an access only the individual herself may have. Some questions arise: *who* is the one with access to the mind? Is there a "self" or an "I" that is the agent of this cognitive function, inspecting or *introspecting* on the internal mental states? Where is the *I* located?

In this course, we will begin by reading some basic background theories of consciousness. We will then move on to read some previous works by the invited speakers as background reading. Once the speakers have sent in drafts of their talks, we will be studying those articles and preparing for responses. There will be heavy reading assignments before the Symposium (April 29-30), and students will present their own papers on the subject matter in the last two weeks of the semester. There will be no exams, but students must hand in weekly response essays.

A basic work ethic required for members of this class includes the following:

- (i) **Self-discipline:** One must make sure that all weekly response essays are submitted by midnight the previous day (Monday) via the Blackboard portal or emailed to the instructor.
- (ii) **Integrity:** One must be honest about spending one whole day each week in studying the reading assignments and composing the response essays. There should be no

plagiarism, no browsing through the Internet for quick summary, no mooching off other students' work, or any other form of cheating.

- (iii) The drive for self-improvement: One must aim to become a better reader, a better writer, and a better thinker with the progression of this course. It is only with such a drive could one really gain much from this course.

Learning Goals:

1. Students will learn to reflect on the nature of consciousness and the modes of self-knowledge. In particular, from reading the speakers' works, students will learn about topics such as the subjective experience or phenomenal consciousness, the possibility of privileged access, the modes of introspection, the varieties of self-knowledge and its reliability, the usage of the self-referential term 'I', and the meaning of the notion *the self*.
2. Students will learn to formulate adequate philosophical critiques/responses to philosophical articles as well as to the speakers' talks at the Symposium.
3. Students will master the skills to write a philosophy paper that includes critical reasoning, sustained argumentation, and insight. Students will also improve their abilities to do research in philosophy.
4. Students will demonstrate the ability to organize and present course materials in class. This training can enhance their ability to teach or communicate ideas in public.

Methods of Assessment:

Eight weekly essays (2-3 pages each)	40 % [choose 8 out of 10]
One final paper (8-10 pages)	30 %
Presentation of Course Materials (in groups)	10 %
Presentation of Own Paper (individual)	10 %
Active class participation	10 %
Full attendance	2 % (extra)

To receive a final grade for the course, no portion of your grade can be a "zero".

COURSE GRADES: Calculated on the following scale:

97-100	A+
94-96	A
90-93	A-
87-89	B+
84-86	B
80-83	B-
77-79	C+
74-76	C

70-73	C-
67-69	D+
64-66	D
60-63	D-
Under 60	F

Academic Dishonesty:

“Academic dishonesty is comprised of obtaining or attempting to obtain credit for work by the use of any dishonest, deceptive, fraudulent, or unauthorized means.” The most commonly observed form of academic dishonesty is copying others’ writings on the Internet. Even when you are merely borrowing a single sentence from someone else, doing so without proper quotation marks and author-attribution counts as plagiarism. **Students who commit acts of academic dishonesty will automatically fail the course. The conduct will be reported to the Office of the Dean of Students.** Students with questions about how to cite others’ work should see the instructor.

Class Attendance and Participation:

Students must be conscientious about attending classes on a regular basis. Any consecutive absences must be given proper explanation. **Since we only meet once a week, you are allowed only one absence without explanation. After one absence, every absence will constitute a half-grade reduction in your final grade.** To excuse your absences from that point on, you will need to present credible documentation (busy at work or caught in traffic is not an admissible excuse). Class participation includes active discussion in class, raising relevant questions, answering questions, and paying close attention in class. **Everyone (each student as well as the instructor) is responsible for making this class interesting, engaging, and thought-provoking.**

Classroom Etiquette:

Classroom environment is for the instructor and all students to interact with one another in a professional and intellectual manner. Students are expected to observe common classroom etiquette. Behavior that interferes with classroom activities is considered disruptive behavior. Such behavior includes (but not restricted to)

- (i) constant late arrivals;
- (ii) early departures without proper explanation;
- (iii) chatting with your neighbors during lectures;
- (iv) eating in class;
- (v) doing things unrelated to the course in class, such as reading other books, doing assignments for other courses, or playing with your laptop.
- (vi) not turning off your cell phone in class.

Students with repeated disruptive behavior will be asked to leave the classroom.

General Policies:

1. To succeed in this course, you must 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. If you can't make it to class on any given day, you should send me an e-mail explaining the reason. Attendance is highly emphasized in this class. All students with a full attendance record will receive two extra credits in their final grades.
2. Starting from Week 3, we will be focusing on one philosopher at a time. You should read all assigned articles to get a holistic view of the author, and compose your response essay not on any single article, but on the philosopher's view. Response essays are to be **single-spaced**, 2-3 pages (please do not go over 3 pages). The point of the response essays is to sum up the main points of the philosopher and to give your critical response.
3. Response essays must be handed in **via the Blackboard portal before midnight on Monday (homework left in my mailbox or emailed during class time will not be accepted – I don't want you to miss the class to write your essay during class time)**. Please bring a printout of your submitted paper to class. Essays submitted after the lecture is given will receive zero credit.
4. You are to write one term paper on a topic of your choice (my approval required). The revised paper is due on the scheduled date for the final (instead of taking the final exam). **A half-grade deduction will be made for each day delayed.** I will schedule a paper conference with you to discuss your term paper project.
5. Students will be asked to form groups to give presentations on course materials. The presentation will take the first half of the class. Presenters should prepare an outline of the presented material as handouts, or use Powerpoint. This is a chance for students to develop their ability to organize and present course materials. **On the day of the presentation, presenters should still submit a separate response essay.**
6. To receive a final grade for the course, students must complete all assignments. In other words, if you get a "zero" for any category of the assignments (weekly essays, final paper, participation and presentation), you will automatically fail the course.
7. You are encouraged to meet with me during my office hours or send e-mail messages to me if you have any question regarding the course.

SCHEDULE

Week Date	Reading Assignments	Writing Assignments
1 1/27	Background 1. David Armstrong: What Is Consciousness? 2. José Luis Bermudez: Self- Consciousness 3. Frank Jackson: What Mary Didn't Know 4. Thomas Nagel: What Is It Like to Be a Bat?	None
2 2/3	1. Peter Carruthers: Higher-order Theories of Consciousness 2. Ned Block: Concepts of Consciousness 3. David Chalmers: The Hard Problem of Consciousness	None
3 2/10	1. David Rosenthal: Two Concepts of Consciousness 2. David Rosenthal: Thinking that One Thinks 3. David Rosenthal: Introspection and Self- Interpretation	Response Essay #1 (2-3 pages, single-spaced, submitted online. Please bring a printout of your submitted paper to class.)
4 2/17	1. Alex Byrne: Some Like It HOT 2. Alex Byrne: Introspection	Response Essay #2 (same as above)
5 2/24	1. Fred Dretske: Conscious Experience 2. Fred Dretske: The Mind's Awareness of Itself 3. Fred Dretske: How Do You Know You Are Not a Zombie?	Response Essay #3 (same as above)
6 3/3	1. Jesse Prinz: "Mental Pointing" 2. Jesse Prinz, "All Consciousness is Perceptual"	Response Essay #4 (same as above)
7 3/10	1. Eric Schwitzgebel: The Unreliability of Naive Introspection 2. Eric Schwitzgebel: Acting Contrary to Our Professed Beliefs, or The Gulf Between Occurrent Judgment and Dispositional Belief	Response Essay #5 (same as above)

8 3/17	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. John Perry: The Problem of the Essential Indexical 2. John Perry: Myself and I 	Response Essay #6 (same as above)
9 3/24	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sydney Shoemaker: Introspection and the Self 2. Sydney Shoemaker: Self-Reference and Self-Awareness 	Response Essay #7 (same as above)
3/31	Spring Break No Class	
10 4/7	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sydney Shoemaker: Self-Knowledge and "Inner Sense": Lecture I, The Object Perception Model 2. Sydney Shoemaker: Self-Knowledge and "Inner Sense": Lecture II, The Broad Perceptual Model 3. Sydney Shoemaker: Self-Knowledge and "Inner Sense": Lecture III: The Phenomenal Character of Experience 	Response Essay #8 (same as above)
11 4/14	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. David Chalmers: The Content and Epistemology of Phenomenal Belief 	Response Essay #9 (same as above)
12 4/21	Symposium Papers [TBA]	Response Essay #10 (TBA)
13 4/28	Pre-Symposium Discussion	
14 5/5	Student Presentations of Own Papers	
15 5/12	Student Presentations of Own Papers	
16 5/19	No Final Exam Term Paper Due	

