

The Mind-Body Problem
A brief course description
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Philosophy of Mind is one of the most exciting and actively discussed subjects in contemporary philosophy. In this course we will begin with the current debate on one hot issue in the philosophy of mind: the relation between mind and body. Does the mind have some intrinsic, irreducible qualities that make it distinct from the brain, or is the mind simply the collective activities of the brain? The prevailing view in American analytic philosophy today is that the mind is not distinct from the brain, and that mental phenomena are simply a variety of physical phenomena. We will see how different philosophers argue for such a view. We will also examine whether our mental activities (such as our intentions or our desires) can be fully explained in terms of physics. A related issue of the same significance as the mind/body problem is the nature of mental representations. How does the mind represent the world? Under what conditions would we say that the mind represents the world *truthfully*? How do we assign semantic properties such as "truth" to mental representations? Many philosophers have attempted to construct a theory of content for mental representations that could answer these questions, and we will look at some of the most important theories.

This course will be conducted in the lecture/discussion format, with heavy emphasis on discussion. Students will be asked to read recent articles written by contemporary leading philosophers of the field. Knowledge of the present development of cognitive science or psychology is not required, though appreciated. Some background in philosophy, on the other hand, is a prerequisite.