Phil 317: Philosophy of Mind

Fall 2001

Class meeting time: T R 2:00pm-3:15pm  Instructor: JeeLoo Liu
Class location: Welles 132  Office hours: M W 10am–12pm
E-mail: Liu@geneseo.edu  or by appointment
Telephone: 245-5231 (O)  Office: Welles 103

       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.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Content of discussion</th>
<th>Assignments for this class</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T 8/28</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>None</td>
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<tr>
<td>R 8/30</td>
<td>What Is the Philosophy of Mind?</td>
<td>Read Kim, Chap. 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>T 9/4</td>
<td>Behaviorism</td>
<td>Read Kim, Chap. 2</td>
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<td>R 9/6</td>
<td>Hilary Putnam: Brains and Behavior</td>
<td>Read Rosenthal pp. 151-159</td>
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<td>Homework #1: How does Putnam criticize logical behaviorism? (Can you give his argument?)</td>
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<tr>
<td>T 9/11</td>
<td>The Mind-Brain Identity Theory</td>
<td>Read Kim, Chap. 3</td>
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<td>R 9/13</td>
<td>J. J. C. Smart: Sensations and Brain Processes</td>
<td>Read Rosenthal pp. 169-175</td>
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<td>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.)</td>
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<td>T 9/18</td>
<td>Donald Davidson: Mental Events</td>
<td>Read Rosenthal pp. 247-256</td>
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<td>R 9/20</td>
<td>Davidson (cont'd)</td>
<td>Homework #3: Give your evaluation of the type identity theory and the token identity theory.</td>
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<td>T 9/25</td>
<td>Mind As A Computer: Functionalism</td>
<td>Read Kim, Chap. 4</td>
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<td>R 9/27</td>
<td>Hilary Putnam: The Nature of Mental States</td>
<td>Read Rosenthal pp. 197-203</td>
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<td>Homework #4: How does Putnam specify pain functionally? Do you think this analysis exhausts the meaning of 'pain'?</td>
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<td>T 10/2</td>
<td>Ned Block: Troubles with Functionalism</td>
<td>Read Rosenthal pp. 211-227</td>
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<td>R 10/4</td>
<td>Block (cont'd)</td>
<td>Homework #5: In your assessment, is functionalism the final answer to the mind/body problem? Do you agree with Block's criticisms?</td>
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Mind As A Causal Structure: Causal-Theoretical Functionalism

**Homework #6:** How is causal-theoretical functionalism different from machine functionalism?

**Mid-term Exam**

Introduction: What Is Reduction?

Reductive and Nonreductive Physicalism

Frank Jackson: What Mary Didn't Know

Thomas Nagel: What Is It Like to Be a Bat?

Sidney Shoemaker: Functionalism and Qualia

Jaegwon Kim: Epiphenomenal and Supervenient Causation

Donald Davidson: Thinking Causes

Jaegwon Kim: Can Supervenience and 'Non-Strict Laws' Save Anomalous Monism?

Tyler Burge: Mind-Body Causation and Explanatory Practice

No Class (Thanksgiving Vacation)

Fred Dretske: Mental Events as Structuring Causes of Behavior
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