

Phil 317: Philosophy of Mind

Fall 1999

Class meeting time: T R 11:20 am - 12:35 pm
Class location: Wadsworth 21
E-mail: Liu@geneseo.edu
Telephone: 245-5231 (O)

Instructor: JeeLoo Liu
Office hours: M W 2- 4 PM
or by appointment
Office: Welles 103

Texts: 1. Jaegwon Kim, *Philosophy of Mind* [Westview Press]
2. Fred Dretske, *Explaining Behavior: Reasons in a World of Causes* [The MIT Press]
3. Ned Block (ed.), *Readings in Philosophy of Psychology, Vol. One* [Harvard 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. We will read one representative philosopher, Fred Dretske's books on this issue and try to develop our own view. 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)	20 % [choose 8 out of 10]
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 13**. 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 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 8/31	Introduction	None
R 9/2	What Is the Philosophy of Mind?	Read Kim, Chap. 1
T 9/7	Behaviorism	Read Kim, Chap. 2
R 9/9	Putnam: Brains and Behavior	Read Block, pp. 24-35 Homework #1: How does Putnam criticize logical behaviorism? (Can you give his argument?)
T 9/14	The Mind-Brain Identity Theory	Read Kim, Chap. 3
R 9/16	J. J. C. Smart: Sensations and Brain Processes	Read Smart [handouts] 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 9/21	Davidson: Mental Events	Read Block, pp. 107-119
R 9/23	Davidson (cont'd)	Homework #3: Give your evaluation of the type identity theory and the token identity theory.
T 9/28	Mind As A Computer: Functionalism	Read Kim, Chap. 4
R 9/30	Putnam: The Nature of Mental States	Read Block, pp. 223-231 Homework #4: How does Putnam specify pain functionally? Do you think this analysis exhausts the meaning of 'pain'?
T 10/5	Block: Troubles with Functionalism	Read Block, pp. 268-303
R 10/7	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 10/12	Fall Break	

R	10/14	Mind As A Causal Structure: Causal-Theoretical Functionalism	Read Kim, Chap. 5 Homework #6: How is causal-theoretical functionalism different from machine functionalism?
T	10/19	Mid-term Exam	
R	10/21	Introduction: What Is Reduction?	None
T	10/26	Reductive and Nonreductive Physicalism	Read Kim, Chap. 9
R	10/28	Kim: The Myth of Nonreductive Physicalism	Read Kim [handouts] Homework #7: Can you summarize and evaluate Kim's argument against nonreductive physicalism?
T	11/2	Fodor: Special Sciences	Read Block, pp. 120-133
R	11/4	Kim: The Nonreductivist's Troubles with Mental Causation	Read Kim [handouts] Homework #8: According to Kim, what is wrong with mental causation?
T	11/9	Mental Causation	Read Kim, Chap. 6
R	11/11	Dretske: <i>Explaining Behavior</i>	Read Dretske, Chap. 1 Homework #9: Give an organized summary of this chapter.
T	11/16	Dretske: <i>Explaining Behavior</i>	Read Dretske, Chap. 2
R	11/18	Dretske: <i>Explaining Behavior</i>	Read Dretske, Chap. 3 Homework #10: Give an organized summary of this chapter.
T	11/23	Dretske: <i>Explaining Behavior</i>	Read Dretske, Chap. 4
R	11/25	Thanksgiving Vacation	
T	11/30	Dretske: <i>Explaining Behavior</i>	Read Dretske, Chap. 5
R	12/2	Dretske: <i>Explaining Behavior</i> [One-page outline of your final paper due]	Read Dretske, Chap. 6
T	12/7	Kim: Dretske on How Reasons Explain	Read Kim [handouts]

Behavior

R 12/9 Review; Conclusion

M 12/13 Final paper due [hand in the paper at my office before noon]

FINAL EXAM: December 21 (Tuesday) 8:00 - 11:00 AM