

PHIL 3301: Philosophy of Mind (CRN 28938)

Professor Marc A. Moffett

Email: mamoffett@utep.edu

DESCRIPTION

At bottom, the philosophy of mind is a dialectic between two opposing schools of thought—physicalism and dualism. **Physicalists maintain that everything in the world may ultimately be accounted for in terms of certain fundamental physical properties**, those properties studied by physicists (and, perhaps, a few other foundational disciplines). One colorful way of putting this thesis is by saying that every world which is a physical duplicate of this world, is a duplicate of it in every other respect, too.

The dualist denies these claims. According to the dualist, the mind is something wholly new under the sun. Although the linkage between the mental and physical is very tight (lawlike), **it is nevertheless conceptually possible to distinguish the two in such a way that the mental facts are neither identical to nor determined by the physical facts.**

This course is structured around the ongoing debate between these two schools of thought. We will begin with a dilemma: On the one hand, we will discuss some arguments that (purport to) show that the mind and the body cannot be identical (The Identity Theory); on the other hand, we will discuss some arguments that (purport to) show that the mind and the body cannot be distinct (Dualism).

We will then take a long, hard look at the most promising way out of this dilemma, the Functionalist Theory of Mind. **Functionalism is in one sense a form of dualism, since it treats the mental as distinct from the physical. Nevertheless, Functionalism is acceptable to the physicalist because it treats the mental as entirely determined by the physical facts.** How this is possible is something we will spend considerable time getting clear on.

Despite its obvious merits and sheer theoretical beauty, there are a number of important troubles for Functionalism. We will consider the most important of these and ultimately find the theory unsatisfactory. This puts us back into the frying pan. However, our discussion of Functionalism will put us in a position to see how we might be able to salvage Dualism from its most telling objection, the problem of mind-body interaction. Consequently, I will conclude that Dualism is the least objectionable theory of mind (though you, the student, need not agree with my assessment).

Although the course is centered around this dispute between physicalists and dualists, the issues will force us to consider a number of other important topics in the philosophy of mind. These include problems of mental causation, externalism about mental content, and introspective knowledge of one's mental states.

COURSE OBJECTIVES, MATERIALS, & EVALUATION

Objectives:

- To develop a critical understanding of the fundamental nature of the mind.
- To develop an ability to clearly express and defend not only your own opinions on these matters, as well as the views and arguments of those with whom you disagree.

Materials Required:

- Online course packet of required and optional readings.

Evaluation:

This course is an upper division philosophy course. Students will be expected to have academic skills commensurate with its level including: the ability to read complex primary source material, the ability to write clear, well-constructed essays, and the ability to engage in articulate and respectful discourse. You are responsible for all material and announcements made in class. No late assignments will be allowed without a University excuse.

Midterm and Final Exam (100 points each)

One Research Essay (100 points): At least 5 pages. (Double spaced, 1" margins, 10-12 point font. Do not exceed 10 pages).

- Note: All essays should have 10-12 point font and 1" margins. You will need cite your sources. I do not require any particular style format EXCEPT please use (Author, Date) in text citations.

Discussion Board Participation (180 points total): One post consisting of at least five full sentences. Two responses to fellow students consisting of at least two full sentences. 30 points overall per discussion board participation.

- NOTE: Discussion board content must be substantive and address the material being covered in the module. Merely quoting or summarizing course content will not get you full points. Similarly, comments that merely agree with another person’s post will not be counted. I particularly encourage thoughtful argumentation, analysis and critical discussion. Please see the Netiquette section below for appropriate discussion board behavior. I will, at my discretion, give **extra credit** points for particularly good posts and/or comments.
- Discussion board comments and responses for each module must be completed by the date given in the course calendar at 11:59 pm.

Total Possible Points for Course: 480

Grading scale

A	B	C	D	F
≥89.5%	≥79.5%	≥69.5%	≥59.5%	<59.5% (percentages)

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND NETTIQUETTE

Academic Integrity: Integrity is a concern for everyone. By joining the UTEP community every student agrees to abide by the scholastic dishonesty policy ([available here](#)). Any student who commits an act of scholastic dishonesty is subject to discipline. Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, and the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable to another person.

Cheating:

- Copying from the test paper of another student
- Communicating with another student during a test
- Giving or seeking aid from another student during a test
- Possession and/or use of unauthorized materials during tests (i.e. Crib notes, class notes, books, etc)
- Substituting for another person to take a test
- Falsifying research data, reports, academic work offered for credit

Plagiarism

- Using someone's work in your assignments without the proper citations
- Submitting the same paper or assignment from a different course, without direct permission of instructors

Collusion

- Unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing academic assignments

Netiquette

- Always consider audience.
- Remember that members of the class and the instructor will be reading any postings.
- Respect and courtesy must be provided to classmates and to instructor at all times.
- No harassment or inappropriate postings will be tolerated.
- When reacting to someone else's message, address the ideas, not the person. Post only what anyone would comfortably state in a F2F situation.
- Blackboard is not a public internet venue; all postings to it should be considered private and confidential. Whatever is posted on in these online spaces is intended for classmates and professor only. Please do not copy documents and paste them to a

publicly accessible website, blog, or other space. If students wish to do so, they have the ethical obligation to first request the permission of the writer(s).

Philosophy of Mind

The Mind/Body Problem: Dualism and the Identity Theory

(Dates: Jan. 19th - Feb. 9th)

Lectures

- Map of the Mind/Body Problem
- Descartes' *Cogito*
- The Knowledge Argument
- Types and Tokens
- Rigid Designators and Multiple Realizability

Readings

- Rene Descartes, Meditation II (from *Meditations on First Philosophy*)
- Karen Bennett, "Mental Causation"
- J. J. C. Smart, "Sensations and brain processes"
- Saul Kripke, Lecture III from *Naming and Necessity*
- Donald Davidson, "Mental events"
- Ted Honderich, "The argument for anomalous monism" [

Assignments

- Discussion Board #1 (Due 02/11, 11:59 pm)
-

Functionalism

(Dates: Feb. 10th - 25th)

Lectures

- How the existential quantifier works
- Ramsification (Or how you can be a coke machine)

Readings

- Gilbert Ryle, "Descartes' myth"
- Rudolph Carnap, "Psychology in physical language"
- Hilary Putnam, "Brains and behavior"

- Jerry Fodor, "Special sciences"
- Jaegwon Kim, "Emergence: Core ideas and issues"
- David Lewis, "Psychophysical and theoretical identifications"

Assignments

- Discussion Board #2 (Due 02/26, 11:59 pm)
-

Problems for Functionalism Part I: Consciousness

(Dates: Feb. 27th - Mar. 11th)

Lectures

- The Knowledge Argument and the Necessary A Posteriori
- Absent Qualia
- Zombies

Readings

- Thomas Nagel, "What is it like to be a bat?"
- Frank Jackson, "What Mary didn't know"
- Ned Block, "Troubles with functionalism"
- David Chalmers, "Consciousness and its place in nature"
- David Chalmers, TED talk on the hard problem of consciousness

Assignments

- Discussion Board #3 (Due 03/13, 11:59 pm)
 - Midterm Exam (Due 03/18, 11:59 pm)
-

Problems for Functionalism Part II: Intentionality

(Dates: Mar. 12th - 25th)

Lectures

- Intentionality and Intensionality
- Frege's Puzzle

Readings

- John Searle, Video on intentionality

- Gottlob Frege, "On sense and reference" (pp. 209-218)
- Paul Audi, "Property identity"
- George Bealer, "The self-consciousness argument"

Assignments

- Discussion Board #4 (Due 03/27, 11:59 pm)
-

Dualism Reconsidered

(Dates: Mar. 26th - Apr. 14th)

Lectures

- Some Theories of Causation

Readings

- Stephen Yablo, "Mental causation"
- George Bealer, "Mental causation"
- Karen Bennett, "Why the exclusion problem seems intractable, and how, maybe to tract it"
- John Norton, "Causation as folk science"

Assignments

- Discussion Board #5 (Due 04/16, 11:59 pm)
-

Externalism and Self-Knowledge

(Dates: Apr. 15th - May 6th)

Lectures

- Externalism: Semantic and Mental

Readings

- Hilary Putnam, "The meaning of 'meaning'"
- Tyler Burge, "Individualism and the mental"
- Michael McKinsey, "Anti-individualism and privileged access"
- Anthony Brueckner, "What an anti-individualist knows a priori"
- Andy Clark & David Chalmers, "The extended mind"

- Andy Clark - Video: What is the extended mind?

Assignments

- - Discussion Board #6 (Due 04/07, 11:59 pm)
 - Essay (Due 04/29, 11:59 pm)
 - Final Exam (Due 05/12, 11:59 pm)