

FC 0503-5: MIND AND BEHAVIOR

Monsoon 2022

Times: TuTh 3:10-4:40 (AC 04 005)

Instructor: Tammo Lossau

Contact: tammo.lossau@ashoka.edu.in

Office hours: Tuesday 2-3 (AC 01 614)

Teaching Fellow: Jasmine Kaur

Contact: jasmine.kaur_tf@ashoka.edu.in

Office hours: Thursday 11:20-12:10 (AC 01, workstation on 6th floor)

Link for booking time at office hours: https://calendly.com/jasminekaur_tf

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Is there something special about human minds or can our conscious experience be explained by physics just like the rest of the universe? And if so, what is the nature of our beliefs, emotions, and other mental states? What about morality – is it a feature of the world as well, or maybe just a useful fiction we have created? We will explore these questions through (mostly) contemporary philosophical writings. We will also develop essential skills such as reading complex academic texts and reconstructing their core arguments, constructively discussing these issues and giving feedback on another student's ideas, and expressing philosophical ideas in structured, concise, and linear pieces of writing.

LEARNING GOALS

This course is structured as an introduction to some philosophical themes that connect with the question whether our world is entirely physical, and what the implications would be if this was the case. These questions should be of interest to those considering a major or minor in philosophy, but may also provide a useful background for those interested in natural or cognitive science, among others. At least equally important, however, is the development of some general skills that are important beyond philosophy:

- Analytical Reading: We will be reading some difficult and complex texts, some of which are historical and come in unfamiliar forms. We will develop strategies for digesting those texts, reconstructing their core arguments and finding the crucial statements. This will allow us to ask pointed questions to the text and discuss hypothetical ways for the author to expand or tweak their ideas. I have tried to include some shorter and more accessible readings to give us a break in between the hard ones – but please use that time to read all the texts closely and (where necessary) multiple times to make the most of them.
- Critical Thinking: At the heart of philosophy is the critical discussion of controversial ideas. This involves coming up with an interesting idea, but also to develop this idea in detail, understand its implications and explore arguments for and against it. This can sometimes seem like a game of chess: if I say x, my opponent can object y, but I have rejoinder z.... However, the goal is not to win by exploiting an opponent's mistake, but to understand the merits and problems of a philosophical position as much as possible. We will (hopefully) find that this process is easiest in constructive dialogue with others.
- Writing Argumentative Texts: Many of your assignments will involve writing argumentative texts of various lengths (which are self-standing to varying degrees). These texts are supposed to make the case for a philosophical thesis, and are streamlined towards supporting that specific claim (and nothing else). We will aim to develop your ability to express your own thoughts in a way that is structured and written so that others will find them easy to understand and convincing.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

Your course grade will be calculated from the following components:

- Two papers: 20% and 30% (in that order)
- Four small assignments: 40%, each 10%.
- Course participation (including sections): 10%

The due dates for the papers and small assignments are noted on the schedule below. All assignments and papers are due on a Tuesday at the end of the day. I have scheduled them such that there is always a week with no assignments or papers in between. All papers and assignments must be submitted via Google Classroom.

The two *papers* are short pieces of philosophical writing. I will make a selection of questions available about two weeks ahead of the due date, which will also specify the exact length requirements. I will also make a guide on writing these papers (which includes a rubric) available.

The small assignments are shorter and more specific tasks meant to train certain abilities. Assignments will be published at least a week ahead of the due date. There will not be a formal rubric for these assignments, but I will specify criteria for what counts as a good submission.

Your participation grade will reflect the quality (not the quantity) of your verbal participation, especially (but not exclusively) in section. Note that too many absences or frequent late arrivals to class or section will also affect your participation grade.

COURSE POLICIES

- Please aim to practice respectful and constructive discourse with your fellow students. Listen to what others have to say even if it does not relate to what you want to say. Do not interrupt others, and do not dismiss other perspectives. When you criticize others, make an effort to improve upon their ideas instead of flat-out rejecting them. Practicing this kind of discourse will make the class a much better experience for everyone, and may improve our capacity to engage with differing world views.
- Please arrive to class on time, as late arrivals tend to be disruptive and make it particularly difficult to plan group activities. Regularly arriving late will impact your participation grade. Arriving more than 15 minutes late counts as an absence.
- Attendance is mandatory for both the lecture and the discussion sections. You can miss up to four classes without an excuse, any further absence requires a valid excuse (e.g. illness). More than four unexcused absences will result in a penalty on your participation grade.
- Infection with Covid counts as an excuse for missing classes. However, if you have Covid (or another infectious disease), but are generally feeling well and would like to attend class, just send me a short email the evening before class, and I will try to make online participation possible.
- Paper submission policy: all papers are due at 9pm on the posted due date. There is a grace period until 1am, during which papers are considered to be submitted on time. After that, every day the paper is late will reduce its grade by 5% (so a 90% on your paper will become 85% for one day, 80% for two days, etc.).
- All work you submit for this class must be your own, and you cannot re-submit your own work from other classes either. Any content you take from other sources must be clearly marked as such. This includes direct quotations, but also paraphrases of other people's ideas. Failure to do so is plagiarism, which is a serious violation of academic integrity and will result (depending on the level of it) in penalties on the paper or a failing grade on the class.
- If you have a disability or other condition that is making it more difficult for you to participate in this class, please contact me. I am happy to discuss accommodations that will make it easier to successfully complete this class.

- This course will use the following grading scale: <https://www.rapidtables.com/calc/grade/gpa-to-letter-grade-calculator.html>
- Because of the delayed start of the FC courses, the university has scheduled two make up classes on October 1 and November 26 (both Saturdays) at 10:10-11:40 in AC02 LT 211-12. Because I realize that it may be more difficult for you to attend these or prepare for these, I have not assigned readings for them and attendance for these two sessions is not mandatory – i.e., if you miss one or both of these two classes, it will not count as an absence. We will use these sessions to review content and workshop ideas for papers.

SOME GENERAL ADVICE

- This course will require you to read difficult texts, some of which are even trickier to read because they are historical and written in an unfamiliar style or format. Don't expect to be able to read through them quickly: many of these texts will require you to read things twice or to go back when you notice you missed something earlier. Please don't feel disheartened by this: these readings are meant to be a challenge. Also, do raise questions about the reading in class or in discussion sections: you'll often be surprised by how many of your classmates will have the same question.
- The secret to a good piece of classwork is this: you start working on it early. Even if the piece you are writing might be short, it is always extremely helpful to be able to sleep over it. When you look at your writing again the next day, you will often have a much clearer sense of what you need to do and how you might change your paper to achieve that.
- If you have questions or are experiencing any type of difficulties, do send us an email. If you are struggling with writing an email to your professor/TF, this guide might be helpful to you: <https://www.wikihow.com/Email-a-Professor>
- DON'T PANIC

COURSE SCHEDULE

<i>Day</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Reading</i>	<i>Notes</i>
September 13	Introduction; Philosophical Arguments		
September 15	Philosophical Arguments	Rosenberg	
<i>I. Historical Accounts of Mind and Matter</i> <i>Are there souls in addition to physical matter? Are they really separate?</i> <i>Or does one exist without the other?</i>			
September 20	Descartes and the Skeptical Method	Descartes	
September 22	Critiques of Descartes	Husserl	
September 27	Immaterial Realism	Berkeley	Assignment 1 due
September 29	Anatman	Buddha, Nagarjuna	
October 1	Review Session		Make Up Session (10:10, AC02 LT 211-12)
<i>II. The Contemporary Debate about Consciousness</i> <i>Can conscious experience be explained within a physical framework or is it irreducible to physics?</i> <i>Does perhaps everything have a nonphysical component?</i>			
October 4	Qualia	Jackson	
October 6	The "Problem of Consciousness"	Chalmers	

October 11	Physicalism	Churchland	Assignment 2 due
October 13	The Intentional Stance	Dennett	
October 18	Panpsychism	Sprigge	
October 20	Integrated Information Theory	Tononi	
<i>midterm break/Diwali</i>			
November 1	Perennial Idealism	Albahari	Paper 1 due
November 3	Review Session		
<i>III. Mental States, Physicalism, and the World Around Us</i> <i>What is the nature of mental states like belief? Can these be captured as brain states?</i>			
November 8	Behaviorism	Braithwaite	
November 10	Artificial Intelligence	Turing	
November 15	Affordances	Siegel	Assignment 3 due
November 17	Review Session		
<i>IV. Morality and Nature</i> <i>Where do our moral attitudes come from? Do we need to suppose that morality is concerned with mind-independent facts? Or is morality a useful fiction?</i>			
November 22	Origins of Moral Thinking	Mencius	
November 24	Empathy and Morality	Smith	
November 26	Workshop Session		Make Up Session (10:10, AC02 LT 211-12)
November 29	Utilitarianism	Smart	Assignment 4 due
December 1	Capabilities	Nussbaum	
December 6	Is Morality Real?	Joyce	
December 8	Review Session		
December 20			Paper 2 due

READINGS

All readings will be made available as pdfs in the Drive folder for this class linked in Google Classrooms. They are listed here in the order in which they appear on the syllabus.

Rosenberg, Jay (1996). *The Practice of Philosophy: A Handbook for Beginners* (3rd ed.). Prentice Hall. Chs. 2-3 (pp. 10-34).

Descartes, René (1641). *Meditations on First Philosophy*. Transl. by John Cottingham. In: id., *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, Vol. II. Cambridge University Press 1984. – First and Second Meditation (AT VII 17-34).

Husserl, Edmund (1954). *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*. Transl. by David Carr. Northwestern University Press 1970. – Part II, sections 16-20 (pp. 73-83).

Berkeley, George (1710). *The Principles of Human Knowledge*. Ed. by Jonathan Bennett. Available online at <https://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/berkeley1710.pdf>. – Introduction and Part I, par. 1-40 (pp. 1-21).

The Buddha (undated). *The Book of the Aggregates (Khandhavagga)*. Transl. by Bikkhu Bodhi. In: *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha*. Wisdom Publications 2000. Excerpt: III.63-72 (pp. 906-910).

Nagarjuna (undated). *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way*. Translation and Commentary by Jay Garfield. Oxford University Press 1995. Ch. 18, pp. 245-253.

Jackson, Frank (1982). Epiphenomenal Qualia. *The Philosophical Quarterly* 32: 127-136.

Chalmers, David (1995). Facing up to the problem of consciousness. *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 2 (3): 200-219.

Churchland, Patricia (2011). The Brain and Its Self. *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 155, 41-50.

Dennett, D. (1971). Intentional Systems. *The Journal of Philosophy* 68: 87-106.

Sprigge, T. (1998). Pansychism. In: *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Routledge.

Tononi, Giulio (2004). An information integration theory of consciousness. *BMC Neuroscience* 2004, 5:42.

Albahari, Miri (2019). Perennial Idealism: A Mystical Solution to the Mind Body Problem. *Philosopher's Imprint* 19(44): 1-37.

Braithwaite, Richard (1933). The Nature of Believing. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 33: 129-146.

Turing, Alan (1950). Computing Machinery and Intelligence. *Mind* 59, 433-460.

Siegel, Susanna Affordances and the Contents of Perception. In B. Brogaard (ed.), *Does Perception Have Content?* Oxford University Press

Mencius (undated). *Gaozi*. Translated by James Legge. In: *The Works of Mencius*. Clarendon Press 1985. Available online at: <https://ctext.org/mengzi>

Smith, Adam (1759). *The Theory of Moral Sentiment*. Cambridge University Press 2002. Part I, Section I (pp. 11-31).

Smart, Jack (1973). An outline of a system of utilitarian ethics. In id. and Bernard Williams, *Utilitarianism For and Against* (pp. 1-75). Sections 1, 2, 6 and 10.

Nussbaum, Martha (2021). The Capabilities Approach and the History of Philosophy. In E. Chiappero-Martinetta et al. (eds), *The Cambridge Handbook to the Capabilities Approach* (pp. 13-39). Cambridge University Press.

Joyce, Richard (2005). Moral Fictionalism. In Mark Kalderon (ed.), *Fictionalism in Metaphysics* (pp. 281-313). Oxford University Press.