Philosophy of Mind – An Introductory Survey

Revised 10 April 2005

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Office: 217 Skinner Hall
Office Hours: Tuesday, 2-4
Class Time and Location: M & W, 2:40-3:55, Rees 304.

Goals of the Course

In this course we will survey important developments in 20th century analytic philosophy of mind, our goal being to establish a firm foundation upon which to understand and critically assess contemporary work in the area.

Texts

There is no designated textbook for the course. Readings for the course will consist in a selection of original articles, and are available on the course website, in .pdf format.

There are a number of well-written books that provide general overviews of the field. These include:

Churchland, P. (1988), Matter and Consciousness, revised edition, MIT Press. [This is a very accessible introduction. On reserve at the MHC main library.]


Rey, G. (1997), Contemporary Philosophy of Mind: A Contentiously Classical Approach, Basil Blackwell Publishers. [Another more advanced (and admittedly biased) introductory text. MHC does not own this book, but it can be requested from other local libraries.]

Finally, be aware that there are a number of helpful reference texts that contain entries on topics in the philosophy of mind (as well as other areas of philosophy), including:

The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy, Cambridge University Press. [On reserve at the MHC main library.]
The Oxford Companion to Philosophy, Oxford University Press. [Available at the MHC library, in the Main Reference section, call number B51 .O94 1995.]

The Oxford Companion to the Mind, Oxford University Press. [This encyclopedia focuses more on psychology and neuroscience than philosophy, but can be useful (although it is a bit out of date). On reserve at the MHC main library.]

Course Website

The course website can be reached from:
http://www.mtholyoke.edu/~wschonbe/courses

A username and password is required to view the readings for the course. They are:

Username: phil
Password: mind

Tentative Schedule

The following reading and assignment schedule is subject to change. Any changes will be announced on the course website and in class. It is the responsibility of the student to keep track of any changes.

Readings – both required and optional – are marked with a bullet (•). Assignments are marked with an arrow (→) [a more robust schedule of assignments is given later in this document].

1. W 26 Jan: Introduction
   → Assignment #1 (see handout), due Monday the 31st.

Part I: The Mind/Body Problem

2. M 31 Jan: Substance Dualism
   • Descartes, R. Meditations (excerpts from II and VI)
   • Descartes, R. ‘Correspondence with Princess Elizabeth’.
   → Assignment #1 Due.

3. W 2 Feb: Substance Dualism Denied
   • Smullyan, R. (1980), ‘An unfortunate dualist’, in: This Book Needs No Title,
Prentice-Hall.
  → Assignment #2 (handout), due Monday the 7th.

4. M 7 Feb: Logical Behaviorism
   → Assignment #2 Due.

5. W 9 Feb: Logical Behaviorism
   • Putnam, H. (1965), ‘Brains and behavior’
   → Assignment #3 (handout), due Monday the 14th.

6. M 14 Feb: Identity Theory and Functionalism
   → Assignment #3 Due.

7. W 16 Feb: Functionalism

8. M 21 Feb: Troubles With Functionalism & Anomalous Monism

9. W 23 Feb: Anomalous Monism
   • Davidson, D. (1971), ‘Psychology as philosophy’

10. M 28 Feb: Eliminative Materialism

11. W 2 Mar: Wrap Up & Review

12. M 7 Mar: Mid-Term Examination (in class)

Part II: Mental Representation – Form and Content
13. W 9 Mar: Can Computers Think? Artificial Intelligence & The Turing Test


Optional:
- Newell, J. and Simon, H. (1976) ‘Symbols and search: computer science as empirical inquiry’ [This is a classic statement of AI principles]

→ Assignment #4 (handout), due Monday, 21 March.


15. M 21 Mar: Can Computers Think? AI & The Chinese Room


Optional:

→ Assignment #4 due

16. W 23 Mar: Class Cancelled

17. W 28 Mar: The Language of Thought

- Fodor, J. (1987), *Psychosemantics*, chapter 1 (‘The persistence of the attitudes’)

Optional:
- Fodor, J. (1987), ‘Why there still has to be a language of thought’
- Churchland, P.M. & Churchland, P.S. (1983), ‘Stalking the wild epistemic engine’

18. M 4 Mar: Connectionism and the Propositional Attitudes


For an introduction to artificial neural networks, see:
For an influential attack on connectionism, see:

19. W 6 Apr: Propositional Attitudes and Instrumentalism

• Dennett, D.C. (1981), ‘True believers: the intentional strategy and why it works’

This paper by Dennett sparked an interesting exchange between Dennett and Stephen Stich:


20. M 11 Apr: Naturalizing Intentionality


We are only looking at the tip of the iceberg as regards theories of mental content. Some of the other classic papers on naturalizing mental content include:

• Brentano, F. ‘The distinction between mental and physical phenomena’ (excerpt).
• Cummins, R. (1989), Meaning and Mental Representation, MIT Press.

21. W 13 Apr: Mental Content – the Internalism / Externalism Debate


Other important works on internalism/externalism include:

• Fodor, J. (1987), Psychosemantics, chapter 2.
22. M 18 Apr: Early Disputes / General Information

- Akins, K. (19XX). “What is it like to be boring and myopic?” [response to Nagel]

23. W 20 Apr: The Knowledge Argument


Some other responses to the knowledge argument:


24. M 18 Apr: Modal Arguments

- Kripke, S. (1972), Naming and Necessity

25. W 20 Apr: Higher-Order Thought Theory

27. W 27 Apr: Afterthoughts


28. M 2 May: Last day of class.

The Short Assignments

Throughout the semester you will be asked to complete a number of short writing assignments. Assignments may take a variety of forms, but usually they will consist of several questions regarding one or more of the required readings, and you will be asked to answer these questions.

Since they will form the basis for discussion for the meeting, these assignments are due at the beginning of the relevant class meeting. There are no exceptions to this rule.

Each short assignment is worth a total of five points, and there will be approximately 10-15 such assignments during the course of the semester.

The Bibliography

During the semester you will be asked to compile an annotated bibliography on a topic in the philosophy of mind. An annotated bibliography consists of a list of papers – both contemporary and classic – germane to a particular topic, along with a short description of (i) the thesis of the paper, and (ii) how it relates to other papers or the topic in general.

The purpose of this exercise is to provide an opportunity to engage in active research, gain familiarity with research methods in philosophy, and to be exposed to a range of articles that you would otherwise not be aware of.

More information on the methods involved, format, length, and so forth, will be provided at a later date.

Note that the bibliography can serve as part of the paper-writing process.

The Midterm Exam
There will be a midterm examination. It will focus on the first part of the course – the mind-brain problem – and will consist of a number of relatively short essay questions.

The Term Paper

In order to facilitate the goal of crafting a well-written paper, the process of writing the final term paper is divided into a number of sub-goals, each of which is required. They are:

1. Deciding on a topic.
2. An introductory summary of the theory or theories that are to form the topic of the paper.
3. A rough draft of the paper.
4. Meeting to briefly discuss your paper.
5. A final draft of the paper.

The overall paper is worth 40% of the final grade, and is broken down into: Initial summary (5%), rough draft (15%), final draft (20%). The meeting is an opportunity to discuss the written comments I give you, engage in informal discussion on the topic of your paper, etc. While the meeting is required, it is not graded.

Final Grades

The final grade is calculated according to the following decomposition:

- In-class assignments: 15%
- Midterm exam: 25%
- Annotated bibliography: 20%
- Term paper: 40% (broken down as specified above).

There is no final exam for this course.

Assignment Schedule

Here is a breakdown of the assignment schedule for the course:

1. Short Assignments: As of 26 January 2005, the exact number of short assignments for the course is undecided, although 4 have been explicitly scheduled (for January 31st, February 7th and 14th, and March 7th.)

2. The bibliography is due any time between March 2nd and April 6th, inclusive.

3. The topic statement for the paper is due on April 6th. The rough draft of the paper is due on April 20th.
Comments on the rough draft will be returned to you on April 27th. Sometime between April 28th and April 30th, individual meetings will be held to discuss the paper. The final draft of the paper is due in hardcopy on May 10th.

**Make-Up Work**

There will be several (two, in fact) opportunities to make up a missed short assignment.

Because rewriting the paper is built-in to the paper-writing process, there are no additional opportunities for rewrites of the paper.

There is no opportunity for re-taking the mid-term.

Given that there is ample time to construct the bibliography, there will be no opportunities to ‘re-do’ or amend the bibliography.

**Plagiarism**

Plagiarism occurs when one fails “to record one’s indebtedness to other writers, researchers, and contributors.”¹ The most blatant instances of plagiarism occur when a sentence, sentence fragment, or passage is used verbatim, without any indication it is not an original statement by the author. Less blatant are instances in which individual words are replaced with synonyms, clauses are shifted, or voices changed (e.g., from passive to active), and the resulting modified passage is offered to the reader as an original composition by the author.

In accordance with the standards of academic integrity set forth in the Mount Holyoke Student Handbook (not to mention academic practice in general), plagiarism will not be tolerated in this class.

The first occurrence of plagiarism will result in a 0.0% score for the assignment in which the plagiarism occurs. The second occurrence will result in a failing grade for the course.

**Academic Calendar**

Wed, Jan 26: Classes begin.
Tues, Feb 8: Last day to add classes.
Tues, Feb 15: Last day to drop without 'DR,' last day to declare ungraded option (excludes class of 2008)
Sat-Sun, Mar 12-20: Mid-semester break.

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Mon, Mar 21: Classes resume.
Mon-Fri, Apr 4-8: Academic advising period.
Mon-Fri, Apr 11-15: Fall 2005 pre-registration.
Tues, Apr 12: Last day to drop with 'DR,' and last day class of 2008 may declare ungraded option.
Tues, May 3: Last day of classes.
Wed-Thurs, May 4-5: Reading days.
Fri-Thurs noon, May 6-12: Examinations.
Wed, May 11: Senior grades due.
Tues, May 24: Underclass grades due.
Sun, May 22: Commencement.