

FC 0503-1: MIND AND BEHAVIOR

Spring 2023

Times: TuTh 3:00-4:30 (AC 02-110)

Instructor: Tammo Lossau

Contact: xxx

Office hours: Tuesday 10-11 (AC 01-614) and by appointment via email

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Office hours: can be booked via xxx

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 DS): 10%

The due dates for the papers and small assignments are noted on the schedule below. All assignments and papers are due on a Friday at 9pm. 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, first and foremost, whether you regularly attended lecture and DS and did not exceed your allowed number of unexcused absences (see below). It secondly reflects the quality of your contributions within both.

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.
- It is important that we are able to start lecture and DS on time, and that everyone is present at the beginning. For that reason, you are not allowed to participate in either if you are five minutes or more late. If this happens, you will be sent away from lecture/DS. You will also not be counted as having attended that session.
- Attendance is mandatory for both the lecture and the discussion sections. You can miss up to four classes (e.g. three lectures and one DS) without an excuse, any further absence requires a valid excuse (e.g. illness documented by a doctor's note). More than four unexcused absences will result in a penalty on your participation grade.
- You are not allowed to use electronics in lecture and DS, including laptops, tablets and phones. A broad range of studies show that the use of electronics in classroom settings leads to diminished learning outcomes. Exceptions are made for students with relevant accommodations from the OLS.
- To allow you to work without electronics, a reader for this class will be distributed by us. Please bring this reader to all lectures and DSs, as we will be working closely with the readings.
- 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.).
- Extensions can be granted only in cases in which you are impacted by unforeseeable events like illness, and they must be agreed on before the deadline for the paper. Please include documentation like a doctor's note when asking for an extension.

- 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 or of the way they have summarized readings. Failure to do so is plagiarism, which is a serious violation of academic integrity and will result in failing the relevant paper. It is your responsibility to understand what counts as plagiarism – not understanding this does not count as an excuse.
- If you need an accommodation for this class, please contact the Office of Learning Support or make sure they forward me your accommodation. I will confirm receipt of their email when I get it and make suggestions/discuss how to best implement those accommodations.
- This course will use the following grading scale: <https://www.rapidtables.com/calc/grade/gpa-to-letter-grade-calculator.html>. (Exception: there is no A+ at Ashoka, so scores above 97 will also count as an A.) Note that this system uses 3-4 point steps – e.g. an A- is a score between 90 and 93.

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. You will also avoid situations in which you are unable to finish your work on time, or are forced to submit a paper that still needs work.
- 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

Day	Topic	Reading	Notes
January 24	Introduction		
January 26	<i>Republic Day – no class</i>		
January 31	Philosophical Arguments	Rosenberg	
February 2	Philosophical Arguments – continued		
<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>			
February 7	Descartes and the Skeptical Method	Descartes, Meditation 1	
February 9	Descartes and Dualism	Descartes, Meditations 2 and 6	Assignment 1 due Friday

February 14	Critiques of Descartes	Husserl	
February 16	Immaterial Realism	Berkeley	
February 21	Anatman	Buddha, Nagarjuna	
February 23	Review Session		Assignment 2 due Friday
<i><u>II. The Contemporary Debate about Consciousness</u></i> <i>Can conscious experience be explained within a physical framework or is it irreducible to physics? Does perhaps everything have a nonphysical component?</i>			
February 28	Physicalism	Churchland	
March 2	Qualia	Jackson	
<i>Spring Break</i>			
March 14	Panpsychism	Sprigge	
March 16	Review Session		Paper 1 due Friday
<i><u>III. Machines and Humans</u></i> <i>Can machines think? Can they be intelligent? Can they even have experience?</i>			
March 21	Artificial Intelligence	Turing	
March 23	Machines and Humans	Lem	
March 28	The Intentional Stance	Dennett	
March 30	Review Session		Assignment 3 due Friday
<i><u>IV. Morality and Nature</u></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>			
April 4	Origins of Moral Thinking	Mencius	
April 6	Empathy and Morality	Smith	
April 11	Utilitarianism	Smart	
April 13	Review Session		Assignment 4 due Friday
April 18	Capabilities	Nussbaum	
April 20	Workshop Session		
April 25	Is Morality Real?	Mackie	
April 27	Wrap-Up Session		
TBD			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>. – Part I, par. 1-33 (pp. 11-19).

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.

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

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

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

Turing, Alan (1950). Computing Machinery and Intelligence. *Mind* 59, 433-460. Skip sections 4 and 5 (i.e. pp. 436-442).

Lem, Stanislaw (1969). Are You There, Mr. Jones? Transl. by Peter Roberts. In: *Vision of Tomorrow* 1, 55-57.

Dennett, Daniel (1971). Intentional Systems. *The Journal of Philosophy* 68: 87-106. Sections I (pp. 88-93) and III (pp. 100-106).

Mencius (undated). *Gaozi*. Translated by James Legge. In: *The Works of Mencius*. Clarendon Press 1985. Available online at: <https://ctext.org/mengzi>. Book I, part 1.

Smith, Adam (1759). *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. 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 (2003). Capabilities as Fundamental Entitlements: Sen and Social Justice. *Feminist Economics* 9 (2-3), 33-59.

Mackie, J.L. (1977). *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*. Penguin Books. Chapter 1, sections 1 and 7-9 (pp. 15-17 and 30-42).