

# PHIL 20208: Minds, Brains, and Persons

Geoffrey Hall

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Office Hours: Tuesday 1-3 or by appointment

Office: 117 Malloy Hall

Web: Sakai

Class Hours: 2:00-3:15 MW

Class Room: Flanner Hall 625

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## Course Description

This course will be an introduction to some of the philosophical issues surrounding the nature of persons. Some of the main questions we will consider are: What is the relationship between the mind and the body? Are mental states such as beliefs and desires identical to physical states? What kinds of things are capable of mentality? Can computers think? What does it take for a person to persist through time? We will also have the opportunity to discuss the relationship between these questions and some questions in ethics and theology.

## Course Materials

- All readings will be made available on Sakai.
- Before each class I will send you a reading guide with a set of questions to keep in mind while doing the readings for that day.
- There will be a handout for each class period containing an overview of the main arguments and positions of the paper assigned for that day. A PDF copy of this will be sent to you after each class period.

## Course Objectives

Successful students will:

1. Investigate philosophical questions about the nature of the mind, the relationship between the mind and the brain, personal identity, and related theological and ethical questions.
2. Improve their ability to comprehend, dissect, and evaluate philosophical arguments.

3. Improve their ability to articulate philosophical ideas/arguments clearly and persuasively in their own writing.
4. Improve their ability to read and understand difficult texts.

## Grading

Final grades will be determined by 7 components:

- Participation: 15%
- Quizzes: 10%
- TPQs: 10%
- Paper 1: 15%
- Paper 2: 15%
- Midterm: 15%
- Final Exam: 20%

The papers and exams are required, in the sense that failure to complete them will result in a failing grade.

## Participation

You are expected to take an active role in class discussion. In order to get full participation credit you must do the readings every week before class, make a comment every class and contribute positively to the overall conversations.

## Quizzes

There will be five quizzes throughout the term. The goal of these quizzes is to make sure that one understands the basic views and concepts covered up until that point. They will be short, and may consist of multiple choice questions.

## TPQs

You will be required to submit two questions each week prior to the first class period of the week. The questions must be submitted at least 8 hours before the class period for which they are due. The questions will be submitted on a google document that will be shared with you. The questions must be "Thought Provoking Questions" in the following sense: (i) they must demonstrate that you have actually engaged with the text. If I can settle the question by a quick google search or by looking briefly through the text itself, then you have not done this. (ii) they should engage with the main arguments and positions that are talked about within the text. You should be looking for parts of the argument that you do not understand or that seem to you to be ill supported. Spend some time trying to work it out for yourself before submitting the question. Some weeks, I may ask that you attempt to write out the main argument of the paper in standard form in lieu of the TPQ (the term 'argument in standard form' will be explained in class.)

## Papers

You will write two short papers during the course of the semester (about five pages). These will be tightly constrained: you will be asked to (i) state a thesis you will defend (chosen from a list of theses we have covered in class), (ii) give an argument in favor of that thesis (this will most likely be an argument that we have covered in class), and (iii) reply to what you think is the strongest objection to your argument.

## Midterm and Final

There will be an in-class midterm on February 25th (during the ordinary scheduled class period), and a final exam on Tuesday, May 7th, from 4:15 PM to 6:15 PM . The exams will both be blue book exams. Before each exam you will be given a list of possible questions that will occur on the exam. I will choose four questions to include on the exam and you will then be required to provide essay responses to three of them.

## Grade Scale

Notre Dame has no official way of indexing numerical grades to letter grades. This is the system that will be used in this course:

<u>A</u>	94+
<u>A-</u>	90-93
<u>B+</u>	87-89
<u>B</u>	83-89
<u>B-</u>	80-82
<u>C+</u>	77-79
<u>C</u>	73-76
<u>C-</u>	70-72
<u>D</u>	60-69
<u>F</u>	59-

## Course Policies

### Laptop Policy

I do not allow the use of laptops (or any other gadgets) during class. There are three main reasons for this policy. First, laptops are commonly used for purposes unrelated to the class (e.g. checking email or Facebook), which can be distracting. Second there is research suggesting that students learn material more effectively when taking notes by hand than when taking notes on a laptop. Third, handouts will be made available to you electronically after the class period. These will often contain detailed accounts of the topics for that day.

### Late Assignments

Late assignments will be accepted for no penalty if a **valid** excuse is communicated to me **before the deadline**. After the deadline, assignments will be accepted for a 50% deduction to the score up to 2 days after the deadline. After this any assignments handed in will be given 0. TPQs submitted after the class period for which they are due will not be accepted for credit.

### Honor Code

In all of their assignments, students are responsible for compliance with the university's honor code, information about which can be found at <https://honorcode.nd.edu/>. You should acquaint yourself with the policies and penalties described there.

Additionally, the philosophy department has prepared a document explaining what the honor code requires of students visa-à-vis writing a philosophy paper. I **strongly recommend** that you read this document, which will be made available on Sakai. It is possible to violate the honor code without intending to do so; the best way to avoid this is to carefully read through the philosophy department's guidelines.

The most common honor code violations occur when students read an internet source while working on a paper and use material from that source without citing it. If you read something not assigned in this course as part of your work on a paper, you **must** cite the source, whether or not you quote anything from that source. Paraphrasing or summarizing the work of others without clear acknowledgement of that work is plagiarism.

## Tentative Reading Schedule

### 0.1 Mind and Matter

**Week 1** Introduction.

1/16 No Readings.

**Week 2** Substance Dualism.

1/21 René Descartes, *Meditations* I-II.

1/23 René Descartes, *Meditations* VI; Quiz on Soundness and Validity.

**Week 3** Dualism and Qualia.

1/28 Frank Jackson, "Epiphenomenal Qualia."

1/30 David Chalmers, "The Puzzle of Consciousness."

Recommended Reading: Zoe Drayson, "The Philosophy of Phenomenal Consciousness."

**Week 4** Dualism, Free Will and Objections.

2/4 Princess Elisabeth and René Descartes correspondence (selections), Karen Bennett, "Why I am not a dualist." (selections)

2/6 Roderick Chisholm, "Human Freedom and the Self."

**Week 5** Objections to Dualism and Behaviorism.

2/11 David Papineau, *Thinking about Consciousness*, chap. 1; Quiz on Dualism.

2/13 Gilbert Ryle, "Descartes' Myth."

**Week 6** Identity Theory and Functionalism.

2/18 J.J.C Smart "Sensations and Brains Processes."

2/20 Hilary Putnam "The Nature of Mental States."

### 0.2 Minds and Machines

**Week 7** Computationalism.

2/25 **Midterm Exam**

2/27 Max Tegmark, "Matter Turns Intelligent."

**Week 8** Computationalism and Artificial Intelligence.

3/4 David Chalmers, "The Singularity: A Philosophical Analysis," sections 1-2, 4.

3/6 David Chalmers, "The Singularity: A Philosophical Analysis," sections 5-9. **Paper 1 Due.**

SPRING BREAK

**Week 9** The Chinese Room.

3/18 John Searle, "Can Computers Think?"

3/20 Patricia and Paul Churchland, "Could a Machine Think?"

### 0.3 Consciousness and Nonhuman Animals

**Week 10** Consciousness.

3/25 Thomas Nagel, "What is it like to be a bat?" Amy Kind, "Nagel's "What is it like to be a bat" argument against physicalism."

3/27 Daniel Dennett, "Animal consciousness and why it matters." Quiz on Computationalism.

**Week 11** Consciousness continued.

4/1 Micheal Tye *Tense Bees...*, Chapter 3; David Fost Wallace "Consider the Lobster."

4/3 Mike Huemer "Dialogues on Ethical Vegetarianism Part I and II"

## 0.4 Persons and Personal Identity

**Week 12** The Psychological View

4/8 Rebecca Goldstein "Identity Crisis" (selection), John Locke "Of Identity and Diversity"

4/10 Peter van Inwagen "Materialism and the Psychological-Continuity Account of Personal Identity"

**Week 13** Animalism and Dualism

4/15 Eric Olson, "An Argument for Identity Theory"

4/17 Richard Swinburne, "Personal Identity: The Dualist Theory." Quiz on Animalism and the Psychological View.

**Week 14** Personal Identity and the Ethics of Abortion

4/22 Easter Holiday

4/24 SEP Personal Identity and Ethics selection.

**Week 15** Personal Identity and Life after Death

4/29 Lynn Rudder Baker, "Materialism and Persons and the Doctrine of Resurrection,"

5/1 van Inwagen "I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come." Final Quiz.

**Week 16** Final Exam, Final Paper Due.