

Philosophy of Mind

Phil 448, Sec. 01, Fall 2017

Location: College Hall 241

Days/Time: T,Th 12:25-1:40

Instructor: Charles Lassiter **Office:** Campion 205

Office hours: Mon 2-4, Tues, 8:30-9:30, Fri 2-4, and by appt

Email: lassiter@gonzaga.edu

Phone: (509) 313-6761 (office)

Skype: charlesslassiter **Google+:** charles.lassiter

“...doing philosophy ought to be *fun*.” — Paul Grice, “Reply to Richards” in *Philosophical Grounds of Rationality*

“Philosophy is thinking really hard about the most important questions and trying to bring analytic clarity to both the questions and the answers.” — Marilyn McCord Adams in *Philosophy Bites*

“The aim of philosophy, abstractly formulated, is to understand how things in the broadest possible sense of the term hang together in the broadest possible sense of the term.”

Wilfred Sellars, “Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Mind”

Course Description

The concept of mind has a long and respected history in the Western philosophical tradition. Plato seems to think that mind or soul was a separate substance, capable of reincarnation. Aristotle thought that mind was a kind of substantial form (i.e. a kind of organization of materials) that made a living human being what she is. Augustine and Descartes leaned Platonic; Aquinas and Wittgenstein trended Aristotelian.

One of the interesting questions in philosophy of mind concerns the *boundaries* of mind: where does your mind end and the rest of the world begin? The orthodox answer has been that the mind ends at the brain and everything else is not-mind. As we’ll see throughout this course, there are a lot of reasons to think that that view is wrong. We’ll see that some people think that the boundaries of mind include the body; still others (like yours truly) think the boundaries of mind include many aspects of the social and cultural world. Along the way, we’ll sharpen our intuitions about mind by considering animal and machine minds.

I’m also interested in some of the normative implications of how the line is drawn between mind and world. If the world is nothing but a source of inputs for mind, does that somehow demean the world or us? Does that demand greater objectivity in reasoning? If mind includes the social world, does that entail cognitive relativism? These are just a few of the questions that we’ll be considering over the course of the term.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Articulate the importance of mental representations in contemporary philosophy of mind
2. Identify kinds of scientific evidence that are important for their considered positions
3. Identify and discuss important implications of philosophical views about mind

Course Texts

Andy Clark, *Mindware: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Cognitive Science*. ISBN: 9780199828159

Other materials will be made available on Blackboard.

Course Work

In-class activity sessions: 20%

Philosophico-empirical short essays: 20%

Final paper proposal: 10%

Final paper: 40%

Reading quizzes: 10%

Here are the details; note that all work will be submitted through *Turnitin* (mostly to save paper):

1. **In-class activity sessions**

Description: Four times during the semester, students will be assigned into groups and given a set of questions for which they will develop answers. These questions will require students to think about the implications of the materials discussed during the semester. Students will also be encouraged to bring resources for research, e.g. laptops, tablets, outside texts, etc. Each group will then write up a *five-page* (double-spaced) *response* (not including bibliography) to the question asked. Each question will be broken up into several parts, and these questions will be given out on the day of the activity session. Each group member will also have to write a few sentences about their contribution to the paper. These papers will be due *one and a half weeks* after the in-class session.

Purpose: Stephen King wrote in his autobiography that fiction begins with a “what-if” scenario. *The Shining* is, “what if a recovering alcoholic and his family were trapped in an isolated hotel for the winter?” *Salem’s Lot* is, “what if vampires invaded a small New England village?” And *Cujo* is, “what if a young mother and her son became trapped in their stalled car by a rabid dog?”

Philosophers (at least some) do something similar; they find some interesting idea or question and then explore it. That’s more or less what we’re doing in these sessions, with the exception that I’ll offer you the questions to explore. (If you feel that you have a great question you’d like to explore

with your group, feel free to run it by me!) These assignments are aimed at getting you all to think and work like philosophers. *Satisfies outcomes 2 & 3*

2. Philosophico-empirical short essays

Description: Students will write *two three-page* (double-spaced) papers. These papers will identify some philosophical claim and then find some empirical evidence that either supports or refutes the claim being made. But I'm a bit persnickety about the format of these papers. Here is exactly what I want to see:

- (i) a statement of the claim you're considering
- (ii) a brief (= 1-2 paragraph) description of the idea you're considering
- (iii) a description of the relevant empirical evidence
- (iv) an explanation for how the empirical evidence either supports or refutes the philosophical claim mentioned in (i) and described in (ii)

And I want to see brief headings for each of these.

Purpose: One of the aims of the class is using empirical evidence in support of (or against) a philosophical hypothesis, a practice stretching all the way back to Aristotle (at least!). But it's not always easy to read philosophical conclusions off of empirical findings; oftentimes, philosophers have to explain how the empirical evidence leads to the philosophical idea (or how the empirical evidence is evidence against the idea). That's just what you're doing with the assignment. My persnickiness about the formatting is to help you make sure that you hit all the relevant points: clearly identifying and describing the philosophical idea, the empirical evidence, and the jump from the empirical evidence to the philosophy. *Satisfies outcomes 2 & 3*

3. Final paper proposal

Description: Your final paper is an opportunity to explore some particular issue in greater detail, but I want to make sure that you're on the right track and get some feedback before you go too far down the road. In your *three-page* proposal, you'll identify for me (1) the relevant issues from the course that you're investigating, (2) a preliminary thesis, and (3) evidence for that thesis.

Purpose: The proposal is relatively straightforward. It's a mechanism by which I offer you some feedback on what you'd like to think about and analyze in greater depth. *Satisfies outcomes 1, 2, & 3*

4. Final paper

Description: Exactly what you think. It will be 8-10 pages (double-spaced) not including bibliography. Additionally, for some extra credit (amount to be determined) you can share your research project with the class on our last day while we drink coffee and eat stuff.

Purpose: We will get the chance to think about some ridiculously interesting ideas in this class. This paper is a chance for you to do some thinking about these issues on your own (with some help from me) and in greater detail than we can in class. *Satisfies outcomes 1, 2, & 3*

5. Reading Quiz

One meeting per week (beginning with the second week) will start with a short 5 minute quiz. These quizzes are between a regular weekly quiz and a pop quiz—you know there's one every week, but the day on which you have the quiz changes. Answers will either get full credit, half credit or no credit. Students cannot make up missed quizzes, but the final quiz grade will be the **total number correct out of the total number taken**. So if we have 12 quizzes in a semester and you miss two because of absences, then your quiz grade will be the number you get right out of 10 instead of out of 12.

Purpose: The purpose of these quizzes is twofold. First, they are a way to get students in the right frame of mind for thinking about moral issues; it's a way to mark the beginning of a period of time in which we're doing moral philosophy. Second, they are a way to encourage students to keep up with the reading. *Satisfies course objective 1*

Read this! If you are a student with a testing accommodation, please email me (or see me privately) if you think that the reading quiz will pose a problem. I'm happy to work with you on a solution.

Grading Scale

Numerical Value	Letter/GPA point value	Rough idea of what the grade means
94-100	A/4.0	Outstanding. Student goes above and beyond what is required. (E.g. offers an insight/analysis that appears elsewhere in the philosophical literature; does extensive research for papers/presentations.) Concepts elucidated clearly and with novel examples.
90-93	A-/3.7	
86-89	B+/3.3	Very good. Student does more high-quality research than is required for the assignment.
82-85	B/3.0	
78-81	B-/2.7	Average. Doing what is assigned.

		Note that following the instructions will put you in the orbit of this grade.
74-77	C+/2.3	
70-73	C/2.0	
65-69	C-/1.7	Below average. Doing less than what is assigned. Missing some component(s) of an assignment.
60-64	D/1.0	
<60	F/0.0	Plagiarism. Failure to show anything learned.

Attendance

Students are allowed to miss **four** classes. If you exceed the number of absences permitted, your grade will go down one letter for each additional day missed. Exceptions include: documented illness (undocumented illness isn't exempted), religious holidays, military commitments, travelling for sports events (or comparable extracurricular activity, e.g. debate team).

Late Work

Papers are penalized by one letter grade for each class it is late. If students know ahead of time that they will have some difficulty meeting a deadline, please contact me. I'll be more than happy to take other commitments you might have into consideration when assigning due dates.

Plagiarism and Cheating

Plagiarism, or taking someone else's work without giving credit to the original author, can and must be avoided at all costs. It violates the integrity of scholarship and academic honesty. It is certainly fine to build on or explain the work of others, and in fact, such communal work is necessary to expand our knowledge. But, to claim the other's work as your own is dishonest, and honesty is essential to the life of a student.

Plagiarism and cheating are not tolerated. The first instance of plagiarism results in a 0 for the assignment. The second instance results in a failing grade for the course. All cases of plagiarism are reported to the Dean's office. Please see the University's "Code of Academic Honesty" in the student handbook, available online through the University website. If you have any questions about what does or does not count as plagiarism or cheating, please feel free to ask me.

Statement Concerning Sexual Misconduct

Gonzaga University recognizes the inherent dignity of all individuals and promotes respect for all people. Sexual misconduct is not tolerated at Gonzaga. This includes unwanted physical/sexual contact, sexual assault, and unwanted and harassing sexual comments. (Clearly, this list isn't exhaustive.) If you have been the victim of sexual misconduct, I want you to know that I am a first point of contact for getting you in touch with mental health services, campus police, and (if you

should choose to pursue legal action) city police. As a faculty member, I am interested in promoting a safe and healthy environment. But you should also know that if you tell me anything that incriminates a student, I am legally bound to report that information. The technical terminology here is that I (and all other faculty and administrators) am a *mandatory reporter*. This rule might seem a little draconian, but it prevents faculty and administrators from being passive bystanders: if you tell me something, I'm breaking the law if I don't tell the relevant people, e.g. Gonzaga University's title IX coordinator. But I understand that you might not want to begin going down the road of an investigation. Perhaps you just want to talk with someone about what happened. That's ok. If you would feel more comfortable talking with someone other than me or any other mandatory reporter, here are some phone numbers that will connect you with people to whom you can talk.

- **Gonzaga Health Center** | [509.313.4052](tel:509.313.4052) | 704 E Sharp Avenue
- **Gonzaga Counseling Center** | [509.313.4054](tel:509.313.4054) | 324 E Sharp Avenue
- **Any priest serving as a sacramental confessor or any ordained religious leader serving in the sacred confidence role.** | [509.313.4242](tel:509.313.4242)
- **Lutheran Community Services and SAFeT** | [509.624.7273](tel:509.624.7273)

The people you would talk to at these numbers are either (1) bound to keep the information to themselves (e.g. a priest serving in the role of confessor) or (2) are not affiliated with the university in such a capacity that makes them mandatory reporters (e.g. Lutheran Community Services). But no matter whether you talk to me, another faculty member/administrator, or someone at one of the above numbers, there are lots of people in the Gonzaga community who want — and are able — to help.

Course Schedule

Note: This is a projected reading schedule. We may get a little behind if some concepts require further fleshing out or generate discussion. That's ok. We'll compensate accordingly. On the other hand if students want to move faster, I can *definitely* find more material and will adjust the schedule as needed.

Another note: If the reading isn't (1) hyperlinked here or (2) on our course text, it's available through Blackboard.

Module 1: Getting together the necessary tools

Week 1:

8/29: Intro: Clark, appendix 1

8/31: [Plato on Forms](#); [Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Meditation 1](#)

Week 2:

9/5: Descartes, [Meditations on First Philosophy, Meditations 2 and 6](#)

9/7: Hume, [An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, sections 2 and 3](#)

Week 3:

9/12: Arthur C. Parker, “How the World Began,” and Bruce Wilshire, chapter 2 from *The Primal Roots of American Philosophy*, **Short Essay #1 Due**

9/14: John Dewey, “The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology”

Week 4:

9/19: Ludwig Wittgenstein, from *Philosophical Investigations*

9/21: **In-class activity:** Animals, minds, and world: reading TBD

Module 2: from philosophy to cognitive science

Week 5:

9/26: Clark, chapter 1

9/28: Clark, chapter 2

Week 6:

10/3: Clark, chapter 3 (optional: 3.2 (A)), **Short Essay #2 Due**

10/5: Clark, chapter 6 (optional: 6.2 (B))

Week 7:

10/10: Clark, chapter 7 (optional: 7.2 (E) & (F) and box 7.3)

10/12: **In-class activity:** Group minds

Module 3: AI

Week 8:

10/17: Alan Turing, “Computing Machinery and Intelligence” (sections 1-3, 7)

10/19: Diane Proudfoot, “Rethinking Turing’s Test”, pp. 391-402

Week 9:

10/24: Marvin Minsky, ch. 1 & 2 from *Society of Mind*

10/26: Rodney Brooks, “Intelligence without Representation”

Week 10:

10/31: Jeffrey Dean, “Animats and what they can tell us”

11/2: **In-class activity:** AI and creativity

Module 4: Language

Week 11:

11/7: Steven Pinker, *The Language Instinct*, chapter 2, **Final Paper Proposal Due**

11/9: Steven Pinker, *The Language Instinct*, chapter 3

Week 12:

11/14: Lakoff and Johnson, from *Metaphors We Live By*

11/16: Lakoff and Johnson, from *Metaphors We Live By*

Week 13:

11/21: **In-class activity:** Mind, language, and hate speech

11/23: **Thanksgiving — no class**

Module 5: Environments: Social and Physical**Week 14:**

11/28: Clark, ch. 9

11/30: Silberstein and Chemero, “Complexity and Extended Phenomenological-Cognitive Systems”

Wrap-up**Week 15:**

12/5: Read excerpts from Christakis and Fowler, *Connected*

12/7: **In-class activity:** Mind, world, and belief.

Final Paper open discussion (plus food!): Tuesday, December 13, 3:30 pm