PHIL 308: Metaphysics and Mind
Spring 2006
Syllabus

MWF 2:40 – 3:55, Upjohn Library 307

Co-instructor: Dr. Ashley McDowell

Office: 202 Humphrey House
Office phone: 337-7077
email: mcdowell@kzoo.edu or ashley.mcdowell@gmail.com
Office hours: MTWF 1:30 – 2:30;
and by appointment, except on Thursdays (unless there is an emergency)

Co-instructor: Dr. Stephen Petersen

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Office hours: TW 10-12;
and by appointment

Note on Moodle: this course website will include at least some useful information – go to
http://moodle.kzoo.edu/moodle/ and find our course, and get yourself logged on.

Note on email: We will be sending mail to the class alias, which only knows your K email address. Make
sure your K email is forwarded to whatever email account you use regularly, if it’s
something else.

Texts and Readings

- Brian Cooney, The Place of Mind; Wadsworth (TPM)
- (optional) Douglas Hofstadter and Daniel Dennett, The Mind's I: Basic Books
- (optional) John Perry, A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality: Hackett Publishing
- readings on the Internet and on reserve as announced

Course Description

This course is about philosophical issues in the areas of metaphysics and philosophy of mind, and at their
intersection. Metaphysics is the study of the nature of reality, and philosophy of mind studies metaphysical issues having to
do with minds. A philosophical study of these topics is one in which we give thoughtful reasons for positions on various
issues. In this course, through readings, lecture, and discussion, you will learn about the views of prominent historical and
contemporary philosophers on some key issues in metaphysics and mind.

In particular, we will focus on four main topics (the first two taught by Ashley and the second two by Steve). The
first issue we'll discuss, the “mind/body problem,” involves questions about the nature of mind and its relation to body. Is
the mind a nonphysical soul-like entity, or is the mind the brain, or is it the software that runs on the brain’s hardware, or is
it something else? The next issue is really a subissue of the mind/body problem: the “problem” of consciousness. Can the
qualitative part of our experience – the part involving what it feels like to be in various states – be captured in purely physical
terms, or is it inescapably nonphysical? The third issue is that of “identity” and “personal identity.” This involves questions
of what makes an object, and in particular a person, “the same” over time. If we replace every plank on a ship gradually, is
it the same ship at the end of the process? Every molecule in your body is replaced about every seven years – are you a new
person after the last molecule goes? If not, what does make you the same person – your memories, personality, a causal link to the past, or what? The final issue is that of free will. Does modern scientific knowledge entail that none of our actions is really free? What is it for an action to be free, anyway?

In studying these issues we will be doing a variety of readings. Most of them will be academic philosophical articles, although a couple will stray into supporting material from literature and science fiction. The ideas and arguments in all of the readings will be deep and challenging. You should expect to do most readings more than once. As we will discuss, there will be important interconnections and dependency relations among the readings, so you must also keep up with the reading assignments.

The class will be a combination of lecture and discussion, and all students will be expected to contribute. In-class discussions will be conducted with respect and a mutual interest in solving these problems, so that all views will be open to thoughtful criticism. We will be approaching other views – and our own – with an open-minded but critical eye. The focus will be on providing and assessing arguments for positions, to try to come to the most thoughtful position possible on these questions. Students will be evaluated on how well you have learned the views and arguments of the authors studied, and how well you formulate original arguments for your own positions.

Class Format

In class, we will take questions about the readings and previous class’s material, lecture on the current reading, and engage in seminar-style discussion. We will generally assume that you have understood the material adequately, unless you indicate otherwise. We welcome questions, as they are one of the only ways for us to know what is unclear to you.

You will be responsible for completing the readings before each class, and for being prepared to discuss those readings. Give yourself plenty of time to do these readings carefully – again, they can be quite difficult. We may give you occasional in-class or out-of-class assignments, which will rely upon sincere attempts to understand the readings.

We expect regular attendance in this class. Although attendance makes up no official percentage of your grade, missing class will negatively affect it. Repeatedly missing class may result in a substantial lowering of your grade for the course.

Office hours are held for purposes such as discussing course materials, helping you understand readings, working on philosophical skills, and going over drafts of assignments. Please take full advantage of them.

Course Requirements and Grading Scheme

(for policies on all assignments and on specific assignments, see “Policies” section below)

Papers (60%)

You will be writing four papers for this course, on topics centered around the four main segments of the course (mind/body, consciousness, identity, free will).

The first and third papers will be worth 10% of your total grade each, and will be about 3 pages long. The second and fourth papers will be worth 20% each, and will be about 5 pages long. The second paper in each half of the course is worth more because we will expect you to have learned more about writing a paper based on the feedback from your first effort for each of us. We will give you relatively detailed instructions on what we expect in papers; you should take our expectations quite seriously.

The point of these papers is to construct and present a philosophical argument for a thesis. One goal is to apply for yourself the principles of reasoning, insight, philosophical writing, and argumentation modeled and taught in this class. The other goal is to craft a carefully considered position on an issue, grappling with fundamental problems in your own way. These will not be research papers; we don’t encourage you to look at sources other than those assigned in class, and if you do, you should check with us before you do so that we can advise you on the quality of the resource.

We will be able to look at rough drafts, either turned in or during office hours; we will let you know details as the time gets nearer. We also encourage you to run rough drafts by each other or your peers at the Writing Center.

Final exam (30%)

The final exam for this course will take place from 1-4 pm on Wednesday of exam week. It will be cumulative, and consist of one part written by Ashley on her segment of the course and one part written by Steve on his segment of the course. It may include short answers, identification and explanation of significance of quotations, and essays.

Participation and conduct (10%)

This will be a participation-intensive course. In a philosophy class of this kind, discussion is absolutely essential, and may be the way you learn most about the material. We know that participation is difficult for some people, but you can consider this a safe place to practice contributing to a group discussion, which you will surely need to do throughout your
life. We will require and ensure that conversation in class, although probably critical of ideas, will not be critical of people. We expect that we will get to know each other well enough to feel comfortable talking relatively quickly. We also intend to make it apparent that you will not be thought worse of for saying anything, as long as you are speaking respectfully.

We will keep general track of your contributions in class. Keep in mind that contributions can take various forms, including asking for clarification, participation in group discussion, and giving helpful examples. Keep in mind also that more does not necessarily mean better: those who excessively dominate discussions, speak disrespectfully, or otherwise use their voices in a negative way may be penalized for doing so. If you are in doubt, ask us.

Class conduct does not carry an official weight in this course, but will be taken into account at final grade time. Your conduct in this class includes improvement and effort. It also includes issues of respectful behavior, such as tardiness, excessive absence, distracting behavior, or disrespectful behavior towards members of the class or us. See the “rules of civility and discourse” below for more information.

Policies

Attendance policy: Attendance is expected. Although it does not carry any formal weight in the grade, it will make a difference to your participation and conduct grade if you are absent excessively (more than a couple of times during the quarter). Absences will be excused for required sports activities or practices or for a dire personal circumstance.

Assignment responsibilities:
- It is your responsibility to retain copies of all assignments you turn in, in a reliable format.
- You must turn in your papers in class, with your name on the back, written legibly. This is so no biases of ours interfere with our grading of your work.
- If you turn in a paper late, by email (this is only possible with our permission), or in any other way that makes it differently turned in from those of the rest of the class members, you should not expect to get it back at the same time as everyone else.
- When you turn in your papers, you must turn in a copy of a rough draft and an outline of the paper (with your name written on the back of each). We cannot recommend outlining and revising philosophy papers enough, and so we want to make absolutely sure you’re doing both. An outline also sometimes helps us understand the intentions of your paper better.

Late assignment policy: An assignment that is between one hour and 24 hours late will receive a ½ grade reduction. An assignment that is between one day and two weeks late will receive a full grade reduction. Assignments will not be accepted more than two weeks late.

A note on reading: don’t succumb to the misconception that in order to read something you only have to move your eyes over the lines, or “read it out loud in your head,” so to speak. What we expect is that you will read the material in a more sophisticated way, thinking as you go. You should be asking yourself the main points, making sure you understand the structure of the reading, thinking about how this reading relates to others you’ve done, and otherwise working to comprehend the material, not just to complete a technical “reading” of it. You might try highlighting, underlining, making marginal notes, or outlining – whatever helps you focus and understand. By the way, don’t forget to read the footnotes or endnotes as well as the main text in your readings; and to read any reflections, introductions, and review questions that directly accompany the readings.

Rules of civility and discourse

In this course, you will be expected to behave like what we are sure you are – a civil person interested in entering into an atmosphere that is maintained to be courteous and respectful. Just so that our expectations are clear, let us express some specific guidelines. In order to create a smooth and harmonious learning community,
- take care not to disrupt class; please
  o wait until class is over to pack up
  o turn off cell phones
  o do not look at any material other than class material
  o stay awake during class
  o arrive on time
- to allow everyone to stay focused on the class lecture or discussion,
  o only one person at a time in the class should be speaking. Side conversations are distracting for surrounding students and for us.
- to ensure the best possible environment for discussion, please
Grading scheme:
Paper 1: 10%
Paper 2: 20%
Paper 3: 10%
Paper 4: 20%
Final exam: 30%
Participation and conduct: 10%

Academic integrity and the Honor System

“It is always important to think of the intellectual world as a community of mutual dependence, mutual helpfulness, mutual protectiveness, and common delight. We take ideas from others and we give them to others. We are indebted to others, and others are indebted to us. In sharing and acknowledging the community, we define ourselves more certainly as individuals. The ability to describe our sources is also an ability to define our own originality and our own selves. All communities depend on generosity, trust, definition, and the proper use of sources is part of the mortar that holds the community of the mind together.”

- Richard Marius, Expository Writing Program, Harvard University

In this class, as in all classes at Kalamazoo College, we will be operating under the Honor System. It is important that you familiarize yourself with that system. You should also familiarize yourself with proper procedures for collaborating, doing research, and citing sources. Should you have any questions about citations, plagiarism, or honor system issues, please visit or contact us.

Any assignment you turn in that we find to violate academic integrity, either through dishonesty, plagiarism, lack of appropriate citations, or unauthorized collaboration, will result in a failing grade in the class and a report to the dean of students as minimum sanctions.[1]

Special needs

If you have any special needs that we can accommodate, please let us know as soon as possible.

Office hours

Our office hours are posted above. They will be conducted on a first-come, first-served basis, unless you make a prior appointment with us. We are also available at other times by appointment. You should feel absolutely free to come to us and discuss the course, the material, the assignments, or philosophy.

Schedule of Readings

This schedule is tentative. Any changes will be announced in class and by email and/or on the Moodle site. The reading assignments listed for each day must be completed before that class. Readings are found in your textbooks as indicated, or will be available on the Internet or on reserve.

WEEK ONE
M Introduction to Class, Metaphysics, and Philosophy of Mind

PART ONE:
### PART ONE: THE MIND/BODY PROBLEM

**WEEK TWO**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>M</th>
<th>Place, “Is Consciousness a Brain Process?” and Smart, “Sensations and Brain Processes” (TPM 5 and 6)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>Rorty, “Mind-Body Identity, Privacy, and Categories” (TPM 8)</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>P.M. Churchland, “Eliminative Materialism” (TPM 9)</td>
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**WEEK THREE**

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<tr>
<th>M</th>
<th>Armstrong, “The Nature of Mind” and Fodor, “Materialism” (TPM 10 and 11)</th>
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<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>Hofstadter, “Prelude…Ant Fugue” (on reserve and in <em>The Mind’s I</em>)</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Searle, “Minds, Brains, and Programs” (on reserve and in <em>The Mind’s I</em>)</td>
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### PART TWO: THE PROBLEM OF CONSCIOUSNESS

**WEEK FOUR**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>M</th>
<th>Nagel, “What Is It Like to Be a Bat?” (TPM 22; optional: read reflections in <em>The Mind’s I</em>) and Jackson, “Epiphenomenal Qualia” (TPM 24)</th>
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<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>P.S. Churchland and P.M. Churchland, “Functionalism, Qualia, and Intentionality” (TPM 25)</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>McGinn, “Can We Solve the Mind-Body Problem?” (TPM 26)</td>
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**WEEK FIVE**

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<tr>
<th>M</th>
<th>Chalmers, “Facing Up to the Problem of Consciousness” (TPM 27)</th>
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<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>Loar, “Phenomenal States” (TPM 28)</td>
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### PART THREE: PERSONAL IDENTITY

**WEEK SIX**

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<tr>
<th>M</th>
<th>Perry, “A Dialogue…” – first two nights</th>
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<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>Perry, “A Dialogue…” – third night</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Parfit, “Reasons and Persons” (TPM 31)</td>
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**WEEK SEVEN**

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<tr>
<th>M</th>
<th>Nagel, “Brain Bisection and the Unity of Consciousness” (TPM 32)</th>
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<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>Dennett, “Why Everyone Is a Novelist” (TPM 33)</td>
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### PART FOUR: FREE WILL AND DETERMINISM

(all readings in this section are from Watson, *FW*)

| F | Smart, “Free Will, Praise and Blame” |

**WEEK EIGHT**

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<tr>
<th>M</th>
<th>G. Strawson, “The Impossibility of Moral Responsibility”</th>
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<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>Nagel, “Freedom”</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Clarke, “Toward a Credible Agent-Causal Account of Free Will”</td>
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**WEEK NINE**

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<tr>
<th>M</th>
<th>Kane, “Responsibility, Luck, and Chance”</th>
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<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>Frankfurt, “Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person”</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Wolf, “Sanity and the Metaphysics of Responsibility”</td>
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**WEEK TEN**

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<tr>
<th>M</th>
<th>Memorial Day Holiday – no class</th>
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<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>Pettit and Smith, “Freedom in Belief and Desire”</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Day of Gracious Living buffer day – adjust above accordingly</td>
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[iii] We owe some of the phrasing in this statement to Prof. Vaughn Maatman