COURSE GOALS:
The course seeks to provide students with a systematic introduction to the philosophy of mind, with an emphasis upon how this 20th-century tradition of thought has been guided by basic metaphysical assumptions about mind (psychological) and matter (physiological). We begin with an overview of the key schools of thought: mind-body dualism, introspective psychology, psychoanalysis, behaviorism, cognitive science, the “strong program” of artificial intelligence, connectionism, embodied cognition, and recent work on the supervenience of selfhood. This quick overview of the terrain sets the stage for our reading of a classic in the scholarship: John Searle’s *The Rediscovery of the Mind*. This book, along with many articles, provides a number of key arguments against the basic orientation of the traditional philosophy of mind: namely, its misguided metaphysical coordinates, which are explicitly or implicitly Cartesian and hence dualistic in nature. While Searle’s positive account of mind – i.e. his account of intentionality – has been severely criticized from a number of quarters, it does set the stage of our reading of contemporary issues: to wit, identity theory and functionalism, non-representationalist theories of intentionality, computationalism, eliminativism, so-called “folk psychology,” externalism, and the content of perception.

The structure and execution of any course reflects the training, preferences, and, indeed, presuppositions of its instructor. This year’s Metaphysics and Mind is no exception. Indeed, it wears the prejudice of the instructor on its sleeve: a good deal of even contemporary philosophy of mind rests upon mistaken assumptions that derive from the dualistic ontological assumptions of Cartesian philosophy. When you peruse the syllabus, you will notice that a single philosopher, John Searle, is given almost three weeks, and that only certain issues have been selected from the traditional array of issues.
addressed in the philosophy of mind. This is not because Searle gets it right but, instead, because he shows how so many others have gotten it wrong. A good deal of traditional and contemporary philosophy of mind rests upon the failure to coherently articulate its central question: namely, the relation of mind to matter, of “consciousness” to “causality,” of psychology to the physical sciences, of our “first-person point of view” to our “third-person scientific point of view.” To oversimplify drastically, traditional reductionist, eliminativist, and (formal) computationalist continue to work within Descarte’s conceptualization of mind and matter, even when they call for the reduction or elimination of mind in favor of matter. The basic problem is that the central question of the mind’s relation to matter has not been articulated coherently because the terms of that contrast have been (explicitly or implicitly) conceptualized as mutually exclusive: what mind is is necessarily not matter, and what matter is is necessarily not mind. This conceptual mutual exclusion has simply replicated the same mistake in different, ever more complex and increasingly disguised forms.

Those who call for the “reduction” of mind to matter – “mind” is just a loose or unscientific way talking about what is really just matter – and “eliminationists” – there’s no such thing as mind – get one thing right: namely, that if one goes about looking for mind from a physical, biological, anatomical, neurological, or formal computational point of view, then one just ain’t going to find it: the very manner of searching necessarily precludes its being found! These theorists are right that the mind is not that, but they miss the point by drawing the wrong conclusion: namely, that there is no such phenomena as mind. The conclusion to be drawn is that the mind is not a bit of stuff – a “substance,” “thing,” or “material” to be observed and explained objectively – but, instead, an activity, an accomplishment, an execution, a performance, or a manner of handling or managing one’s practical and theoretical involvement in the world. While it must be the case that such a purposive activity supervenes upon physical systems, there’s no point in calling for its reduction or elimination. This is where the philosophy of mind becomes interesting because it finally locates its subject matter in a way free of Cartesian metaphysical presuppositions. Some contemporary work in the philosophy of mind has outgrown the latently Cartesian – i.e. dualistic or reductive materialist – way of approaching their subject matter – mind – and a good many of the best theorists have turned their attention to issues regarding supervenience, the attribution of content, externalism and its attendance “extended mind,” and embodied cognition. We will end the course by looking at Antonio Damasio’s recent work on selfhood, which revitalizes in surprising ways a tradition of thought that has been largely ignored or otherwise neglected by philosophers of mind: namely, 19th-Century Idealism.

READING LIST:


• Excerpted articles:
POINTS OF EVALUATION:

- Participation (preparedness, classroom discussion, email exchanges, and office hours): 25%
- Quizzes: 5 @ 5 = 25%
- Midterm Paper: 20%
- Final Paper: 30%

CLASSROOM POLICIES:

Open, respectful, well-informed, critical, and cooperative discussion is crucial to participating in this course. Students are expected to demonstrate these virtues of working well with others in the course, which requires not only sound preparedness by reading course materials and attending to lecture but also respect and cooperation in interacting with others. In particular, students are required to address others in a cooperative, caring, and coordinated manner, and any competitive, adversarial, or combative debate-style engagement will be considered a infraction of classroom behavior. Any discussion that falls below the threshold of preparedness, cooperation, and civility described above will be sharply redirected by the professor. Of course, attentiveness to the individual contributions of others is crucial for maintaining this cooperative setting of discussion, and talking side-by-side instead of within the forum of classroom discussion will not be permitted.

E-mail correspondence provides students with lecture materials important for our interpretation and criticism of texts, and students are expected to check their email at least once a day to pick up classroom correspondence. Weekly written responses to reading questions allow the professor to test students’ comprehension of basic issues and prepare students for participation in classroom discussion. Midterm assignments and the final paper offer students the opportunity to respond in depth to a single topic. The final paper is due on the day scheduled for the final examination. Late papers are graded a half grade down each day that they are late, and all assignments must be turned in to receive a grade for the course. 3 unexcused absences will result in a full grade reduction of the course grade. Attendance at movies in required, and students are expected to discuss course materials with others students in the course. The following are course rules:

- No electronic devices such as computers, ipads, cell phones, or other instruments are allowed: they must be turned off for the duration of the class.
- Classroom notes are not to be shared or in any manner distributed beyond the roster of students and professor.
- Aggressive or combative behavior toward other students or insubordination toward the professor will not be tolerated.
- Students are required to maintain (1) attention to the progressive and cumulative nature of course material and (2) attentiveness to classroom discussion or lecture.

Three infractions of the above expectations will result in being suspended from the course.

Reading Schedule

Historical Trajectory of the Study of Mind: From Cartesianism to Embodied Cognition:

TUESDAY:

- Course Mechanics
• Introductory Lecture: Topics in the Philosophy of Mind

THURSDAY
• Mind: Cartesianism
• Mind: The Rise and Fall of Introspective Psychology

TUESDAY:
• Mind: The Background of Psychoanalysis
• Mind: The Theory of Psychoanalysis

THURSDAY:
• Review and Classroom Discussion:

TUESDAY:
• Mind: Psychology Loses Its Mind: The Behavioral Revolution
• Mind: The Transition from Behaviorism to Cognitive Science

THURSDAY:
• Mind: Mind Regained: The Cognitive Revolution
• Mind: Mind Extended: Connectionist, Dynamical and Situated Cognitive Science

SEARLE’S CRITIQUE OF REDUCTIONISM AND HIS FORMAL ACCOUNT OF INTENTIONALITY:

TUESDAY:
• Rediscovery: Introduction
• Rediscovery: “What’s Wrong with the Philosophy of Mind.”
• Rediscovery: “The Recent History of Materialism: The Same Mistake Over and Over.”

THURSDAY
• Rediscovery: “Breaking the Hold: Silicon Brains, Conscious Robots, and Other Minds.”
• Rediscovery: “Consciousness and its Place in Nature.”

TUESDAY:
• Rediscovery: “Reductionism and the Irreducibility of Consciousness.”
• Rediscovery: “The Structure of Consciousness: An Introduction.”

THURSDAY
• Rediscovery: “The Unconscious and its Relation to Consciousness.”
• Rediscovery: “Consciousness, Intentionality, and the Background.”

TUESDAY:
• Rediscovery: “The Critique of Cognitive Reason.”
• Rediscovery: “The Proper Study.”
SELECTED TOPICS IN CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHY OF MIND:

THURSDAY:
- *Mind and Cognition*: “6: Mental Events”

TUESDAY:  
WEEK SEVEN

THURSDAY:
- *Mind and Cognition*: “27: Folk Psychology is Here to Stay.”

TUESDAY:  
WEEK EIGHT

THURSDAY
- *Mind and Cognition*: “33: Knowing One’s Own Mind.”

TUESDAY:  
WEEK NINE

THURSDAY

TUESDAY:  
WEEK TEN

THURSDAY:
- Review and Evaluations:
TUESDAY: FINALS WEEK