

Phil 422: Philosophy of Mind

Location and Time: [Zoom](#) (Password: Qualia), M and W: 4:10 PM - 6:00 PM

Professor Robert Wallace, rhwallac@calpoly.edu

Office Hours: Fridays 2-5PM or by appointment.

The information contained in this course syllabus, other than the grade and absence policies, may be subject to change with advance notice, as deemed appropriate by the instructor.

Course Description:

Philosophy of mind is a subfield in philosophy that focuses on the nature of the mind and the mental. In philosophy of mind, we might ask: what is the nature of the mind? How can we know about it? What is the nature of consciousness? Could a machine be conscious? What is the relationship between the mind and the body? Do experiences cause anything?

Thus, questions in philosophy of mind span issues in metaphysics (the branch of philosophy focused on the nature and structure of reality), in epistemology (the branch of philosophy focused on knowledge and belief), and beyond. As cognitive science has flourished as a discipline, so too has new questions about the mind. Is the mind like a computer, explained by symbolic computational processes? Is your cell phone a part of your mind?

The course being with a specific focus on theories about what the mind consists in, looking at three different kinds of theories and build to questions about machine minds, extended minds, and animal minds. We will rigorously examine these issues in the mode of contemporary analytic philosophy. (Contemporary, insofar as we will look at texts and ideas from about the 1950s to today; analytic, insofar as we will engage with these questions with a focus on argumentative precision and clarity).

Course goals:

You might have thought that the goal of this course was for me to offer definitive answers to these questions. But it isn't. Instead, the goal of the course is to provide you with the tools to think critically, for yourself about these questions, and for you to develop good answers to them. This course will help you develop your own thoughts on these matters. I'm looking forward to hearing what you think!

Learning Outcomes:

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

- State and explain some leading theories and arguments in philosophy of mind.
- Illustrate the assets and liabilities of some leading theories and arguments in philosophy of mind.
- Evaluate the plausibility of some leading theories and arguments in philosophy of mind.
- Write thoughtful, concise papers that exhibits the rhetorical and explanatory standards of contemporary analytic philosophy.

Format:

Due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, class will be held synchronously over Zoom. The course will be entirely online, with our class sessions held synchronously over Zoom on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2:10PM - 4:00PM. All classes will be in the same [Zoom](#) room, password: Qualia. You'll be able to find this link on our Canvas site, as well as recordings of lectures and our discussions.

Class begins on Sept. 14th and goes to the end of the quarter. This is a 4-Unit lecture-discussion course, and you should expect to commit 12 hours per week on this course. A typical class will begin with a lecture-ish overview of the material in question and then transition to a seminar-style format.

Required Text:

Amy Kind, *Philosophy of Mind: The Basics*

All other assigned readings will be posted on Canvas.

Grading and Assignments:

Grade Breakdown: This class will involve three papers. Two are shorter papers based on a prompt. The final paper

Attendance and Participation: 10%

Discussion Questions: 10%

Exam 1: 20%

Exam 2: 20%

Paper 1: 20%

Paper: 20%

Due dates for assignments can be found in the “course outline” section of the syllabus.

Attendance and Participation: Attending class is an essential part of succeeding in this course. You will not do well in this course if you don't show up. The default for attending class is keeping your camera on. You will lose two points for each unexcused absence. Obviously, life happens. Please get in touch with me as soon as you are able if something comes up. Please be aware that religious holidays are “excused absences” for students according to [Cal Poly's Class Attendance Policy](#).

As part of your participation grade, I'm going to ask you to sign up to be a *point person* for two class sessions. (Sign-ups are on Canvas). When you are the point person, I will invite you to discuss your

weekly response and get discussion going. I might ask you to follow up on what another student has said. This will be worth 4 points.

The other 6 points of course participation can take many forms. You get .5 points for (1) substantively contributing to class, (2) commenting on other students' questions, (3) posting to the Q & A forum, up to 6 points total.

Discussion Questions: Before each class, you have to post a question about one of that week's assigned readings. You can write about any of the assigned readings reading to our weekly discussion board by at 11PT the day before class. (So, Tuesday night for a Wednesday class at the latest). I will use them to structure our discussions.

Questions should be just that: questions. They do not have to be long (and in fact, should not be!). Aim for a couple of sentences. A rubric detailing grading for discussion questions is on our canvas site.

Exams: We will have two exams, both of which will be available for you to take on Canvas. Exams will consist of multiple choice and short answer sections. They will be open book. (Consider this to be the digital equivalent of a take home exam). You can take these exams anytime during the week they are assigned. Once you start the exam you will have 2 hours to complete it.

Papers: You will write two papers during the quarter. Each paper will ask you to describe an argument for a view and then critique that argument. These will not be research papers insofar as you will not need materials from outside our course readings. My job is to help you write these papers. I am more than happy to read drafts and outlines, or simply talk through the ideas with you. Your aim in writing these papers is to be clear and concise.

The instructions for the papers and the outline are our Canvas website. We will discuss in class. I will also post a writing guide.

Late Work: Work that is handed in after the day after the deadline has passed will be marked down one full letter grade, and so on. For instance, an A paper that is received within 24 hours of the deadline will receive a B, 48 hours late will receive a C, and so on. The following *do not count* as legitimate excuses: failure to read the syllabus, sleeping in, or forgetfulness. If you require an extension, please contact me as soon as possible.

Rounding and Curving: I will round grades up by .5, so that a 79.5 will earn a B- while a 69.5 will earn a C-, and so on. I will do no other rounding. 79.4s will not be rounded up. Standing policy is that no grades will be curved in the course, but I reserve the right to curve when needed. Please do not rely on this possibility!

Syllabus Acceptance: Before I record any grades for a student in this course, they must complete the "syllabus acceptance" assignment on Canvas.

Classroom Behavior:

This class will be fully online, but usual classroom etiquette norms apply. As in any course, you must be respectful to myself and the other students during this class. Beyond this, as philosophers in

training, you have special reason to treat each other's thoughts and ideas charitably. Each of you (and myself) will be coming at these fundamental questions with different backgrounds, intellectual strengths, and interests. Our class is a place where thoughts can be expressed without fear of bullying or discrimination. Aristotle thought that the best kind of friendship was one where friends make each other more virtuous people; in this class, we should strive to be friends-in-thinking, helping each other to think more clearly about the problems at hand.

Academic Integrity:

Students are encouraged to share intellectual views and discuss freely the principles and applications of course materials. However, graded work/exercises must be the product of independent effort unless otherwise instructed. Ignorance of the academic integrity policies is not a viable excuse. Please thoroughly familiarize yourself with the [Office of Students' Rights and Responsibilities page on Academic Integrity](#), as well as the information found on [Academic Programs and Planning website regarding cheating and plagiarism](#).

Bottom line: do your own work!

If you have any questions about academic integrity, please do not hesitate to ask me!

Inclusion and Classroom Behavior:

This class will be fully online, but usual classroom etiquette norms apply. As in any course, you must be respectful to myself and the other students during this class. Beyond this, as philosophers in training, you have special reason to treat each other's thoughts and ideas charitably. Each of you (and myself) will be coming at these fundamental questions with different backgrounds, belief systems, intellectual strengths, and interests. Our class is a place where thoughts can be expressed without fear of bullying or discrimination. Aristotle thought that the best kind of friendship was one where friends make each other more virtuous people; in this class, we should strive to be friends-in-thinking, helping each other to think more clearly about the problems at hand.

Please be aware that you can update your pronouns on Canvas in the user settings. If you would like more information on pronouns, visit Cal Poly's [Pronouns Matter](#). If your preferred name or pronouns change during the quarter, please let me know. Mistakes in addressing one another may happen. If you make a mistake or are corrected, please briefly apologize and correct yourself. (I will do the same if I make a mistake!)

Accessibility and Accommodations:

We can't be friends-in-thinking unless the learning experience is as accessible as possible for everyone. If you anticipate or experience physical, technical, or academic barriers to your learning experience, please let me know immediately so that we can discuss options. You can always contact the [Disability Resource Center](#). They are located in Building 124, Room 119. I'd be happy to help you with this. I have also set up a page in our Canvas site that has a comprehensive list of student resources with links. You can find it here: [Student Resources Page](#). If your documentation status presents obstacles to engaging in this class, you may request confidential accommodations. You may consult with [RISE](#) or the [Dream Center](#) for examples of possible accommodations. Such arrangements will not jeopardize your student status, your financial aid, or any other part of your residence.

Student Care Resources

If you face challenges securing food, housing or other basic needs, please be aware that many resources are available to support you through [Cal Poly's Basic Needs](#) initiative or by contacting the [dean of students](#). An extensive list of critical care resources is also listed and updated on the Cal Poly Coronavirus information pages [Student Care Resources](#) page.

Mental health is an important part of your overall well-being. Students experiencing personal problems or situational crises during the quarter are encouraged to contact Counseling Services (805-756-2511) for assistance, support and advocacy. This service is free and confidential. Check out the [Campus Health and Wellbeing](#) website for more information.

If you have specific questions about the Covid-19 pandemic, please visit the [Cal Poly Coronavirus website](#). For specific information on frequently asked questions about Cal Poly classes and programs, visit the [Classes and Programs](#) section of this website. If you have concerns about accessing the tools that you need to continue with your studies, including technology, please contact [retention](#).

If I can help you in any way to access the resources above, or if you have any questions about student care resources, please contact me so that I can assist you. I am committed to ensuring that all students have the resources they need to be able to participate in this course.

Course Materials and Intellectual Property

Please note that all course materials, provided by the instructor and/or other sources, are covered by copyright protections. Students are not authorized to record, share, repost, and/or redistribute these materials in any form(s) (such as, but not limited to, hard copy and electronic forms) in any venue(s) (such as, but not limited to, social media platforms and online study material sites). In some cases, sharing, re-posting, recording, and/or redistributing course materials constitutes a violation of Cal Poly academic integrity policies, while in other cases such actions constitute a violation of copyright protections.

Outline of the Course:

Below please find an outline of the course, subject to change. Required readings are just that: required. You have to read these for the class session. Further readings are additional readings to help develop your views on a particular topic. They are not required reading.

Unit 1: Dualism

Week 1: Introduction

9/14

No Reading

9/16

Required Reading: Kind, Chapter 1; SEP “Consciousness”

Week 2: Dualism

9/21

Required Reading: Kind, Chapter 2
Further Reading: Descartes, *Meditations* excerpts

9/23

Brie Gertler, ‘In Defense of Mind Body Dualism’

Week 3: Bats, Zombies, and Other Thought Experiments

9/28

Required Reading: Nagel, “What is it Like to be A Bat”; Chalmers, excerpts

9/30

Required Reading: Frank Jackson, 'What Mary Didn't Know'

Week 4: Identity Theory and Eliminative Materialism

10/5

Required Reading: Kind, Chapter 3
Further Reading: Elizabeth of Bohemia, excerpt from *Correspondences*

10/7

Required Reading: P.M. Churchland, excerpts from *Matter and Consciousness*; Smart, “Sensations and Brain Processes”
Further Reading: P.S. Churchland, excerpts from *Neurobiology*

Assignment Paper 1 Due by 10/11 at 11PM PST

Week 5: Functionalism

10/12

Required Reading: Kind, Chapter 4
Further Reading: Putnam, "The Nature of Mental States"

10/14

Required Reading: Lewis, "Mad Pain and Martian Pain"
Further Reading: Lewis, "Psychophysical and Theoretical Identifications"

Week 6: Bats and Zombies Revisited:

10/19

Required Reading: David Lewis, 'What Experience Teaches'

10/21

Required Reading: Karen Bennett, "Why I Am Not A Dualist" ; Dennett, "The Unimagined Preposterousness of Zombies"
Further Reading: Dennett: 'Quining Qualia'

Assignment: Exam 1 Due by 10/25 at 11PM PST

Week 7: Machine Minds

10/27

Required Reading: Kind, Chapter 5

10/29

Required Reading: Turing, Alan. "Computing Machinery and Intelligence."

Week 8: Are We Machine Minds?

11/2

Required Reading: Clarke, excerpts from *Mindware*

11/4

Required Reading: Block, "The Mind as the Software of the Brain"

Assignment: Paper 2 due by 11/8 at 11PM PST

Week 9: Extended Minds

11/9

Required Reading: Kind, Chapter 6; Vold, "Are 'you' just inside your skin or is your smartphone part of you?"

11/11

Required Reading: Chalmers and Clarke, "The Extended Mind"

Week 10: Extended Minds, Continued

11/16

Required Reading: Gertler, "Understanding the internalism-externalism debate: What is the boundary of the thinker?"

11/18

Required Reading: Drayson and Clarke, "Cognitive disability and embodied, extended minds"

Week 11: Animal Minds and Exam Review

11/23

Mather, "What is In an Octopus Mind?"
Browning, "What is Good for an Octopus?"

11/25

Exam Review

Exam Week

Assignment: Exam 2 due by 11/20 by 7:00PM PST