

# PHIL 316: MINDS, BODIES, AND SELVES

Spring 2022

*Class schedule:* W 2:00-4:30pm  
*Class Instructor:* Katherine Valde  
*Office Hours:* Thursdays 10am-12pm

*Class Location:* CCES 212  
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*Office:* DB 206

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*Philosophy, though unable to tell us with certainty what is the true answer to the doubts it raises, is able to suggest many possibilities which enlarge our thoughts and free them from the tyranny of custom. Thus, while diminishing our feeling of certainty as to what things are, it greatly increases our knowledge as to what they may be; it removes the somewhat arrogant dogmatism of those who have never traveled into the region of liberating doubt, and it keeps alive our sense of wonder by showing familiar things in an unfamiliar aspect.*

-Bertrand Russell

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## **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

Our understanding of our minds, and their relationships to our bodies, has a profound impact on how we understand ourselves. This course examines the concepts of minds, bodies, selves and the relationships among them through an exploration of issues at the intersection of philosophy of mind, psychology, neuroscience, and ethics.

We will consider what science can tell us about what it is to have a mind. Can psychology and neuroscience explain psychological processes without thereby ‘reducing’ or ‘eliminating’ them? Are mathematically rigorous, experimentally testable theories of feeling, perceiving, and thinking even possible?

The course pays special attention to scientific claims regarding mental health and mental illness. Are mental illnesses just brain diseases? What is the relationship between science and subjectivity? How do values and norms of well-being influence our personal and scientific conceptions of mind and mental health?

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

This course is designed to both to provide you with an introduction to some philosophical problems surrounding minds, bodies, and selves and to provide you with skills to approach solving such problems. You will learn to:

- Demonstrate an awareness of relations between various sciences of mind
- Reflect critically on scientific practices
- Identify and understand assumptions in the sciences of mind
- Evaluate science in a broader context
- Interpret and analyze philosophical text
- Apply philosophical concepts in original work

Through gaining a deeper understanding of the complex nature of these philosophical problems, it is the ultimate goal of this course that you will come to an appreciation of how rigorous philosophical thought can and should help us navigate our everyday lives.

## **REQUIRED TEXT:**

No books  
All readings will be provided through Perusall

## **CLASS EXPECTATIONS:**

Do the readings. *Think* about the readings. Our class will not be engaging for you if you do not come prepared. Treat each other and the professor with respect. Be prepared to be challenged. Growth (intellectual and personal) comes from moving beyond our comfort zones!

**GRADING:**

**PARTICIPATION – 10%**

Participation will be assessed on student’s active engagement with the material and each other during class period. Merely showing up and listening respectfully is considered C-level (70%) participation.

**PERUSALL – 20%**

Students are expected to complete readings on Perusall. You will be expected to read the entire document, make high quality annotations, and return to reply to other student comments. You make at least 6 high-quality comments/responses per assignment. Annotations are substantive questions, engaging comments, and thoughtful responses to your peers’ questions and comments. More meaningful engagement will earn a higher grade.

**TAKE-HOME MIDTERM EXAMS – 40% (20% EACH)**

This course will have two take-home midterms which will consist of short answer and long answer questions designed to check students comprehension of key ideas from this course.

**FINAL PAPER PROJECT – 30%**

For this paper you will answer a question of your own design relating to some topic from class. These projects will include proposing and presenting an abstract (5%), getting project approval in a one-on-one meeting with your professor (5%), completing peer review of complete drafts of your paper (20%), and a submitting a final paper (70%). Final papers should be approximately 1,750 - 2,000 words.

**COURSE SCHEDULE:**

**UNIT 1: WHAT IS A MIND? (WEEKS 1-2)**

Foundations in Philosophy of Mind and Science (The Mind-Body Problem)

Wednesday 2/9	Ch 1. <i>Minds and Bodies: René Descartes and the Possibility of a Science of the Mind</i> (From “The Science of the Mind”) by Owen Flanagan <i>Princess Elisabeth and the mind-body problem</i> (from “Just the Arguments: 100 of the Most Important Arguments in Western Philosophy”) by Jen McWeeny
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Physicalism/Materialism vs Qualia and Consciousness

Wednesday 2/16	<i>Why I’m Not a Dualist</i> by Karen Bennett <i>The argument from mental causation for physicalism</i> From “Just the Arguments: 100 of the Most Important Arguments in Western Philosophy”) by Amir Horowitz <i>What is it like to be a bat?</i> by Thomas Nagel <i>(Optional) Nagel’s ‘What is it like to be a bat?’ argument against physicalism.</i> (From “Just the Arguments: 100 of the Most Important Arguments in Western Philosophy”) by Amy Kind
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**UNIT 2: WHAT CAN SCIENCE TELL US ABOUT MINDS? (WEEKS 2–5):**

Reductionism (Can science give us a unified theory of mind?)

Wednesday 2/23	Ch 5. <i>The Methodological Problem</i> (From “Matter and Consciousness”) by Paul M. Churchland <i>Reduction and Reductionism in Psychiatry</i> (from The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy and Psychiatry) by Kenneth Schaffner <i>(Optional) Reducing Psychology While Maintaining Its Autonomy via Mechanistic Explanation</i> (From “The Matter of the Mind: Philosophical Essays on Psychology, Neuroscience, and Reduction”) by William Bechtel
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The Explanatory Gap and non-reductive explanation

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Wednesday 3/2	<i>Explanation and The Explanatory Gap</i> by Elanor Taylor
	<i>Special Sciences: (or The Disunity of Science as a Working Hypothesis)</i> by Jerry Fodor
	(Optional) <i>The Unity of Science as a Working Hypothesis</i> by Paul Oppenheim and Hilary Putnam

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Social Construction of Science

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Wednesday 3/9	Ch. 6 “ <i>Strong Objectivity</i> ” and <i>Socially Situated Knowledge</i> by Sandra Harding
	<i>The Value-Oriented Bias of Social Inquiry</i> by Ernest Nagel
Friday 3/11	<b>TAKE-HOME EXAM 2 DUE by noon</b>

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**UNIT 3: WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR A MIND TO BE “DOING WELL”? (WEEKS 7-10):**

Is mental illness real? Is mental illness just brain disease?

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Wednesday 3/16	Ch. 4 <i>Madness: Biological or Social Construct?</i> (From “The Social Construction of What?”) by Ian Hacking
	<i>The Myth of Mental Illness</i> by Thomas Szasz
	(Optional) <i>Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: Mental Disorder</i> by Jennifer Radden

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Social Control and Mental Illness

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Wednesday 3/23	Ch1. And Ch. 2 <i>Women, Madness, and Medicine</i> by Denise Russell
	(Optional) <i>Medicalization and Social Control</i> by Peter Conrad

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Individualism (or the effects of the social on the mental)

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Wednesday 3/30	<i>Individualism and the Mental</i> by Tyler Burges
	<i>On What’s in the Head</i> by Robert Stalnaker

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**SPRING BREAK (NO CLASS 4/4 – 4/8)**

**UNIT 4: WHO AM I REALLY? (WEEKS 10-11):**

What can I know about myself?

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Wednesday 4/13	<i>The Unreliability of Naïve Introspection</i> by Eric Schwitzgebel
	Ch. 4 <i>The I of the Storm</i> (from “The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience”) by Francisco J. Varela, Eleanor Rosch, Evan Thompson
	<i>A theory of my own mind</i> by Stephen M Fleming

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Embodied Consciousness & the lack of self?

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Wednesday 4/20	<i>How the Body Shapes the Mind (Introduction)</i> by Shaun Gallagher
	Ch. 6 <i>Selfless Minds</i> from “The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience”) by Francisco J. Varela, Eleanor Rosch, Evan Thompson
	<i>The mind isn’t locked in the brain but extends far beyond it</i> by Keith Frankish
	(Optional) <i>Psychopathology and the Enactive Mind</i> (from “The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy and Psychiatry”) by Giovanna Colobetti

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What can psychology tell us?

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Wednesday 4/27	Neural Mechanisms of Decision Making and the Personal Level (from “The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy and Psychiatry”) by Nicholas Shea
	<i>Myth and the Mind</i> by Rami Gabriel
Friday 4/29	<b>TAKE-HOME EXAM 2 DUE by noon</b>

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**UNIT 5: FINAL PAPER PROJECTS (WEEKS 12-13):**

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Monday	<b>150-word ABSTRACT DUE by noon</b>
Wednesday 5/4	In-class writing workshop

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Week 13 –

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Monday 5/9	<b>COMPLETE DRAFTS DUE by noon</b>
Wednesday 5/11	In-class writing workshop

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