

**PHIL 4310**

**Philosophy of Mind**  
Tuesday/Thursday 9:30-10:45  
Peabody Hall 205S

**Spring 2009**

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## **Topic            Consciousness in Contemporary Analytic Philosophy**

When we say that human beings have minds, we often mean that they are subjects of mental states. Mental states include sensations (e.g. pain) and cognitive states (e.g. perceptual experiences, thoughts, beliefs, and desires). But what is a mental state? In this seminar, we will try to clarify this question. Contemporary philosophers usually distinguish between two central features, or properties, of mental states. On the one hand, most mental states are *about* something. For example, when you see a tree, your perceptual state is about a tree – it represents a tree. This property of mental states is called *intentionality*. On the other hand, most mental states are conscious. Consciousness has been defined in many different ways. But we are most interested in *phenomenal consciousness*. A state is phenomenally conscious when there is something it is like for the subject to be in that state. For example, when you have a toothache, there is something it is like for you to be in that state, for lack of a better word, something very unpleasant. In this course, we will try to gain a better understanding of the philosophical issues arising from these two features of mental states.

This course falls roughly into three parts. In the first part, we will be concerned with intentionality. We will ask how it is possible for a mental state to be about something or to have intentional content. In the second part, we turn to phenomenal consciousness. In this part, we will cover two different topics. We first discuss the so-called *explanatory gap* between physical processes and consciousness. Some have argued that it is not possible to explain consciousness in the same way in which we explain physical processes. We then discuss the so-called *knowledge argument*. This argument was first designed by Frank Jackson and is intended to show that consciousness cannot be reduced to physical processes. In the third part, we will discuss two different attempts to explain consciousness in terms of other notions that do not presuppose consciousness. The first, called *Representationalism*, is the view that phenomenal consciousness can be reduced to a type of intentional content. The second, called the *Higher-Order-Monitoring Conception of Consciousness*, is the view that consciousness can be explained in terms of higher-order monitoring states.

**Required Text** Ned Block, Owen Flanagan, and Güven Güzeldere, *The Nature of Consciousness*, MIT Press, 1997. Available at the UGA Bookstore. (For short NC)

Most of the texts that will be covered in this course are from this reader. Some texts will be made available on webct.

## Course Requirements

i. Weekly Reading Assignments and Participation:

In this course, we will read important philosophical texts. Please read the assigned texts carefully *before* each session so that you are prepared to contribute to the class discussion with comments and questions. Your participation and attendance will not be graded. But it will not be possible to do well in the course if you do not come to class and do not participate.

ii. Two Critical Reports (Due Feb. 10 and March 24):

You are required to write two critical reports of approximately 5 pages (double-spaced, 12pt font). In these reports, I would like you to explicate and evaluate one argument of your choice from one of the texts covered in class. I am particularly interested in a clear and concise explication of the argument and a short discussion of its plausibility.

iii. Final Essay (Due on the last day of classes):

You are required to write a final essay of approximately 10 pages (double-spaced, 12pt font). In this essay, you should compare and discuss the views of two authors covered in the course. I will not assign a topic. But I encourage you to confirm your topic with me before you start working on it.

## Grade

Your grade will consist of the following four components:

- i. Critical Reports. (first report: 20% of your final grade, second report 35%)
- ii. Final Essay (45 % of your final grade)

## Plagiarism and Academic Honesty

All your work submitted in this class must be your own. As you know, plagiarism is a serious violation of the Academic Honesty Policy and will be reported to the university.

Please familiarize yourself with the University of Georgia's Academic Honesty Policy, located at: [www.uga.edu/ovpi/honesty/acadhon.htm](http://www.uga.edu/ovpi/honesty/acadhon.htm)

**Syllabus** (The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.)

### 1. Introduction

Th 1/8 Two Features of Mental States: Intentionality and Consciousness

### 2. Intentional Content

T 1/13 Franz Brentano, "The Distinction between Mental and Physical Phenomena"  
Roderick Chisholm, "Intentional Inexistence" (webct)

|         |  |
|---------|--|
| Th 1/15 | Fred Dretske, "A Recipe for Thought" (webct)   |
| T 1/20  | Ruth Garrett Millikan, "Biosemantics" (webct)  |
| Th 1/22 | Peter Godfrey-Smith, "A Continuum of Semantic Optimism" (webct)  |
| T 1/27  | Robert Brandom, "Reasoning and Representing" (webct)   |
| Th 1/29 | Terence Horgan and John Tienson, "The Intentionality of Phenomenology and the Phenomenology of Intentionality" (webct) |

### 3. Phenomenal Character

#### Subjectivity and the Explanatory Gap

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| T 2/3         | Ned Block, "Concepts of Consciousness" (NC)            |
| Th 2/5        | Thomas Nagel, "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?" (NC)      |
| <b>T 2/10</b> | Daniel Dennett, "Quining Qualia" Problem?" (NC)        |
|               | <b>Critical Report #1</b>                              |
| Th 2/12       | Colin McGinn, "Can We Solve the Mind-Body (NC)         |
| T 2/17        | Paul M. Churchland, "The Rediscovery of Light" (webct) |
| Th 2/19       | Joseph Levine, "On Leaving Out What It's Like" (NC)    |
| T 2/24        | Wrap up session  |

#### The Knowledge Argument

|         |   |
|---------|---|
| Th 2/26 | Robert Van Gulick, "Understanding the Phenomenal Mind: Are we just Armadillos? (NC) |
| T 3/3   | Frank Jackson, "What Mary Didn't Know" (NC)   |
| Th 3/5  | Paul M. Churchland, "Knowing Qualia: A Reply to Jackson" (NC)                       |
| T 3/17  | David Lewis, "What Experience Teaches" (NC)   |
| Th 3/19 | Brian Loar, "Phenomenal States" (NC)  |

### 4. Consciousness and Intentionality

#### Representationalism

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| <b>T 3/24</b> | Sydney Shoemaker, "The Inverted Spectrum" (NC)             |
|               | <b>Critical Report #2</b>                                  |
| Th 3/26       | Gilbert Harman, "The Intrinsic Quality of Experience" (NC) |
| T 3/31        | Ned Block, "Inverted Earth" (NC)                           |

Th 4/2 Stephen L. White, "Curse of the Qualia" (NC)

T 4/7 Wrap up session

Higher-Order Monitoring Conceptions of Consciousness

Th 4/9 David Armstrong, "What Is Consciousness?"

T 4/14 David M. Rosenthal, "A Theory of Consciousness"

Th 4/16 William G. Lycan, "Consciousness as Internal Monitoring"

T 4/21 Fred Dretske, "Conscious Experience"

Th 4/23 Güven Güzeldere, "Is Consciousness the Perception of What Passes in One's Own Mind?"

**T 4/28** Wrap up session

**Final Essay**