

Philosophy 4410: Philosophy of Mind

Fall 2010

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Course webpage: <http://usuphilosophy.com/course-webpages/phil-4410/>

Overview. In this class we will raise questions about what the mind is and how exactly it relates to the body. So, for example, we will consider: how does the mind manage to represent things in the world? What is it to be conscious? Is it possible for a complex physical system to become conscious and have sensations? If not, then what is it about us that makes us conscious? Do souls exist? How would they interact with physical bodies? And so on.

Classes will be a mix of lecture, discussion, and seminar. It is **crucial** that you read the material and prepare for each class. To help encourage this preparation, a series of pop quizzes or short writing assignments will be given in class, or will be assigned in one class meeting and turned in at the next meeting. This is difficult material to read and think through, and I am asking that you do your very best throughout the entire term to understand it and respond intelligently to it.

Texts (all required). Descartes, *Passions of the Soul*; Damasio, *Descartes' Error*; Dennett, *Consciousness Explained*; Aristotle, *De Anima*; Dennett and Hofstadter, *The Mind's I*.

In terms of order, we will start with some items from Hofstadter & Dennett; then proceed through the other books in the order given above, and conclude with some more from Hofstadter & Dennett.

Also, note that we will have some other short readings assigned through the term, to be supplied by me.

Course work.

1. Quizzes and short assignments: there will be 10-15 of these given throughout the term. Each typically should take between five and thirty minutes to complete (that is, *after* you've done the required reading). **None** of these can be made up or turned in late, for any reason whatsoever. That is right: **none**. Some very small number of the assignments will be dropped from consideration, so missing a few will not seriously compromise your grade. But only *a few*. In total, worth **half** the final grade.

2. A longer paper, written in stages. The paper will end up being about 10 pages long. At the first stage, you will set out a problem and one answer to it; at the second, you will criticize those answers, and consider replies to those criticisms; at the third, you will render your own judgment upon the viability of that answer. More details will be given in a separate handout, later. Worth the other **half** the final grade.