

PHIL 355 | INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY OF MIND

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Bartlett 363

What are mental states? What distinguishes objects that have a mental life from those that do not? In this course we will look at different answers to these questions. We will pay special attention to two related views that have been a central part of the contemporary approach to the mind: *functionalism* and *computationalism*. We will begin by introducing the necessary conceptual distinctions and spelling out in some detail what these views amount to. We will then consider challenges they face—particularly those arising from understanding consciousness and the nature of mental representation. We will close by looking at some recent alternatives to functionalism and computationalism and to the revival of dualist views of the mind.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Meetings: TT 9.30-10.45, Bartlett 206

Course website: <http://perezcarballo.org/phil355>

Office hours: TH 11.15–12.30, and by appointment

You are welcome to email me with any questions you may have. As a general rule, I will ask you to come see me if your question is about substantive issues related to the course content. (If your question can be answered by a cursory glance at the course syllabus, however, I may not respond to it at all.)

Note that *I cannot guarantee a response to your email in less than two working days*. It is thus a bad idea to wait until the last minute to email me with a time-sensitive question.

PREREQUISITES

In order to enroll in this course, you must have previously taken two courses in philosophy. I will not presuppose previous familiarity with any of the topics discussed

in class. However, I will presuppose that you know how to reconstruct and critically evaluate philosophical arguments.

READINGS

The following two books are required for this class:

- Chalmers, D. (ed.), *Philosophy of Mind: Classical and Contemporary Readings*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Kim, J. *Philosophy of Mind*. Third Edition. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2010.

Both are available at the [UMass Text Annex](#).

All other readings will be made available electronically. It is your responsibility to check the [readings](#) section of this website periodically.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & EXPECTATIONS

Each day of class you will be expected to be familiar with the material we will be discussing. Thus, you should leave yourselves *plenty* of time to do the readings. The readings for this course are challenging, and you should go over them more than once (for some helpful tips, read Jim Pryor's '[Guidelines on Reading Philosophy](#)'). Do not be discouraged if there are some things you do not understand. Just make a point of noting what it is you don't understand, and bring your questions with you to class. In philosophy especially, the most rewarding discussions often result from the simplest questions.

Class conduct

I expect your undivided attention to this class during the two and a half hours we will be meeting every week. You are welcome to bring your laptops, iPads, etc. so long as you use them responsibly—that is, exclusively for taking notes and/or for reference purposes. Cellphones, however, should be off before you walk into class.

Assignments

In order to pass this course, you will have to complete two in-class exams and write a 1250-1500 word final paper (see the [course calendar](#) for due dates). The topic for the final papers will be announced in due course. Exams will be conducted in class.

There will also be occasional pop quizzes on the readings for the day, and one optional problem set on Turing Machines. All take-home assignments must be submitted on the [Moodle website](#) for this course.

I expect each of you to be familiar with Jim Pryor's '[Guidelines on Writing a Philosophy Paper](#)' before handing in your first assignment.

Note that, as a condition of continued enrollment in this course, you agree to submit your papers to the [Turnitin](#) service for textual comparison or originality review for the detection of possible plagiarism. All submitted assignments will be included in the [UMass Amherst](#) dedicated database of assignments at [Turnitin](#) and will be used solely for the purpose of checking for possible plagiarism during the grading process and during this term and in the future.

Turnitin policy

GRADING POLICY

Your final grade for this course will be based on four components:

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|------------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>First exam: 25%</i> | <i>Second exam: 25%</i> |
| <i>Quizzes: 20%</i> | <i>Final paper: 30%</i> |

Papers will be graded on an A to F scale. You should write, edit, and rewrite your papers until they are *very clear*. An A reflects a well-written paper that raises interesting and original points and develops them thoughtfully and carefully. A B paper is clearly written, but there are some unnecessary diversions, the central argument relies on implausible premises or is invalid, or some key concepts are inadequately defined. A C paper has an unclear or unsupported argument. A D or F paper is late, very unclear, or fails to engage with the central question of the assignment. There are many borderline grades in between. For more details on the grading policy I will adopt in this class, click [here](#).

LATENESS AND EXTENSIONS

No extensions will be granted unless you have a documented, legitimate excuse (e.g. an illness or an emergency). Contact me in advance, if the situation so allows, and as soon as possible if not. If there is a religious conflict or extenuating circumstances that require special consideration, please contact me well in advance. Late assignments will be accepted, but you will be penalized by one third of a letter grade for each day past the deadline.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

It goes without saying that EVERYTHING YOU SUBMIT MUST BE YOUR OWN WORK. I take academic honesty very seriously. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. Each student must be familiar with the University's [Academic Honesty Policy](#). Any suspicion of plagiarism will be thoroughly pursued.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

In order to help me make reasonable, effective, and appropriate accommodations to meet your needs, you should first register with [Disability Services](#). Once you do that, please come talk to me. It would be most helpful to receive the proper paperwork as soon as possible so I can make the appropriate accommodations in a timely manner.