

Biology and Mind/Philosophy of Mind

PHIL 4280/PHIL 6

Fall 2022

Location: Spring Hall 141

Time: Mondays and Wednesdays, 03:10 pm- 04:25 pm

Instructor: Professor Helen De Cruz helen.deacruz@slu.edu

Office hours:

(in person): Monday morning 10 AM – 11 AM in Adorjan Hall 200

Other times (normally Wed morning or Friday afternoon) please book an appointment to meet via Zoom

<https://slu.zoom.us/my/helenldecruz>

Communication:

During weekdays, I aim to send a response to your email within 24 hours, and no more than 48 hours.

Please do not expect a rapid response during weekends or holidays, everyone's work-life balance is important, though I will do my best if it's a genuine emergency.

You can address me as Dr. De Cruz, Professor De Cruz, or Helen. I use any pronouns, except it/its.

Course description:

The human mind is a remarkably complex thing that has, collectively and individually, reflected a lot on itself. Thanks to recent findings from neuroscience and cognitive psychology, we have a better grasp on how the human mind functions, including on such aspects as perception, memory, consciousness, creativity, the self, emotions, and much more. However, thinking about the human mind long predates the emergence of psychology as a scientific discipline. Philosophers across a wide range of times and cultures have formulated sophisticated theories on how the mind works.

The aim of this course is to look at ancient philosophical ideas on how the mind works, with a focus on “less commonly taught” (LCT)¹ philosophical traditions, such as Indian philosophy, Chinese philosophy, African philosophy, and Indigenous traditions from the Americas. We will bring these in conversation with contemporary, cutting-edge work in neuroscience and cognitive psychology. We will pay particular attention to recent trends in philosophy of cognitive science such as embodied and collective forms of cognition, the connection between emotions and virtues, alongside more traditional topics such as perception and expertise.

We will meet twice a week. Typically, we will look at a less commonly taught classical philosophical work on Mondays, and a contemporary philosophy of neuroscience or neuroscience paper on Wednesdays.

I try to keep the reading to a manageable level, so I expect you to come prepared and have read the materials, as I aim to reserve quite a bit of time for discussion.

Learning outcomes

- You will learn to understand where some concepts that are now commonly used in neuroscience and in psychology originate, such as mind, cognition, body, etc. originate and why we think of those concepts in those terms.
- You will learn to see continuities between ancient philosophical texts by classic authors such as Zhuangzi and Ibn Sina and their continued relevance for neuroscience and psychology today.
- You will understand some conceptions that you use in everyday life, such as the notion of the self, or of cognition, or of animal minds, are subject to culturally variable philosophical presuppositions and, by looking at these conceptions in other traditions, better understand your own.
- You will learn to reflect critically on topics in the philosophy of mind, and approach neuroscience in a sophisticated way that is mindful of the theoretical presuppositions that are made.

Course assignments

There are four types of written assignments, and one oral (ungraded) assignment

¹ Less Commonly Taught: It is sometimes called “non-Western” but this term is not preferred because it centers Western texts, and also because some of the texts I use such as Ibn Sina's *Book of Healing* are part of the Western canon. That book was taught in Medieval universities all across Europe until the early modern period.

1. **Commentaries on ancient philosophical texts** – 25% of grade. Write a commentary of about 1000 words (min 800 - max 1200) on an ancient philosophical text. Pick any **two** out of the following options:

- a. al-Kindi on dispelling sorrow
- b. Nagasena's chariot and the self thought experiment
- c. Zhuangzi's butcher and swimmer
- d. Mengzi's moral sprouts
- e. Wang Yangming's commentary on the greater learning

The deadline will always be one week after we discuss the text in class.

You can pick any two you like (doesn't matter if they're in first half or second half of semester), and the grade will be put together at the end of term.

2. **Journaling** – 20% of grade.

Write **six** journal entries out of a total of ten possible topics (see the weekly schedule to check the topics). This is for credit/no credit. Each journal entry should be at least half a page single spaced, and no more than a page single spaced (or between 1 and 2 pages double spaced)

3. **Midterm** – 25% of grade.

Write 2000 words (2200 words for honors students, 2500 words for 6550 students) on **one** of the following three topics

- a. Does the self exist? (critically discuss atman, anatman)
- b. What is the relationship between the brain and mind?
- c. What does it mean to be happy? (referring to either al-Kindi, Zhuangzi, or both)
- d. Critically discuss Ibn Sina's flying man thought experiment and discuss whether it works

References do not count toward the word count.

4. **Final** – 30%

Write 3000 words (3500 for honors students, 4000 for 6550 students) on a topic of your choice. Do not pick a topic of the midterm (though you can choose a topic relating to the first half of the semester including ones you wrote commentaries and journal entries on). References do not count toward the word count.

You need to send a one or two-sentence pitch with a proposal to me, and present your proposal as a lightning talk in one of the final weeks of the course, in order to get feedback on your ideas from fellow students.

Lightning talks are 5 minutes long, with brief Q and A. They are not graded, but required.

You need to have (demonstrably) done significant reading/research beyond the materials in class for this final essay.

Grading

Journaling entries: credit/no credit – if your piece is on topic and you wrote about a page, you will (normally) get credit. If the work is substandard (e.g., very incoherent, no understanding of the material), you will not get the credit but I'll explain why so you can improve and try again with a next assignment until you reach full credit (note there are 10 opportunities for this and you need 6 for full credit).

All other assignments: Except for the journaling entries (of which the grading system is explained above), your work will be evaluated using the 0-4.000 SLU system. In order to evaluate your work, I will use a rubric with four components (each of which is accorded equal weight in determining the grade):

Knowledge and understanding of the material: Did you understand the concept we learned, through reading and class discussion? Are you able to apply these to the problem/essay question at hand?

Research and originality: What new ideas can you bring to the table? For midterm and final essay: did you do any reading beyond what we saw in class? For the commentaries you don't need to do reading beyond what we saw in class (Note: it is good to do additional reading, but make sure that there is still a connection with what we saw in class. If there is no connection, the grade for this aspect will be lowered.) Did you acknowledge your sources? Failure to do so consistently can result in a failing grade due to plagiarism.

Structure: Can a reader follow your line of thought? Do you have a clear argument? The commentaries can be looser in structure, but also there I need to follow your line of thought.

Quality of writing: Is the paper proof-read and clearly written? (Note: if you have dyslexia as a documented disability, you won't get grades deducted for spelling mistakes etc., see the disability statement below). Please avoid tropes such as "Since the dawn of time, mankind" etc, as the dawn of time was about 13.8 billion years ago and that's not a timeframe that is relevant for this class.

Important: use a consistent referencing system

(for one such system, easy and straightforward to use, see:

<https://libguides.murdoch.edu.au/APA> and <https://libguides.murdoch.edu.au/APA/all>). If you don't use any references/sources for the midterm or final, that will lower your grade. It's ok not to use references for the commentaries.

Late policy

You get 3 forgiveness tokens for submitting late work (i.e., you don't need to justify that it is late for three assignments, but please let me know that the work is still incoming). For midterm and final, please email me if it's going to be late and let me know when you will submit, so I can submit the grades in time. Try not to be late for those unless you have a good reason, otherwise it will be difficult for me to grade everything in a timely manner.

Required Readings

I will be using papers and excerpts that will be posted on Canvas, see the schedule for an overview of the papers we will be using.

Attendance

I will be circulating a list for you to sign off so I can learn your names (important in a large class!) Please let me know in advance if you cannot attend (you don't need a doctor's note if it's just a one-off).

Important: If you feel ill and under the weather do NOT come to class (I think this is sensible even outside of Covid times.)

For logistical reasons, this class will not be hybrid (in-person only). In case of absence, you can use the notes which I will always make available, and I use email to communicate about assignments. I hope that you have enough incentive to come to class regularly for the material, which I believe is philosophically exciting, and to stay on top of your work (much much easier to do if you come regularly). Moreover, systematic absence/multiple absences can result in course withdrawal. See SLU policy: In the event that several classes have been missed and students are unable to meet course objectives they should consult with the instructor and academic advisor about course extensions (see the [Incomplete Course](#) policy) or a course withdrawal (see [Course Withdrawal](#) policy). I'll try to keep track of this but also keep track yourself.

Lecture schedule

Mind and cognition

Week 1 – What is a person?

Aug 24, Wednesday

The Akan conception of personhood

Reading: Gyekye, Kwame (1978). The Akan concept of a person. *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 18(3), 277-287.

(optional: Wingo, Ajume, "Akan Philosophy of the Person", Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/akan-person/#IndCom>)

Journal entry (option 1): Compare the Akan concept of a person with American concept(s) of a person.

Week 2 – What is the mind?

Aug 29, Monday

Medieval Muslim conceptions of the mind

Al-Kindi (2007/9th century AD) On the intellect in: J. McGinnis & D.C. Reissman (Eds.), *Classical Arabic Philosophy, an anthology of sources* (pp. 16-18). Indianapolis, IN: Hackett.

August 31, Wednesday

The evolution of the mind

Godfrey-Smith, P. (2013). Cephalopods and the evolution of the mind. *Pacific Conservation Biology*, 19(1), 4-9.

Journal entry (option 2): What can we learn about cognition in octopodes?²

Week 3

Sept 5, Monday

Labour day (no class)

Sept 7, Wednesday

Class cancelled

Week 4 – The intellect

Sept 12, Monday

How the mind and brain relate

Barrett, Lisa F. (2009). The future of psychology: connecting mind to brain. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 4(4), 326-339.

² There is significant disagreement on the plural. "Octopuses" seems most correct but also is improbably boring, so in keeping with the Greek origin of the word, "octopodes"

Sept 14, Wednesday

Medieval Muslim conceptions of the intellect

Ibn Sina, Excerpts from the Book of Healing (Kitab Al-Shifa), I.1-I.5 (classification of the faculties of the soul), J. McGinnis & D.C. Reissman (Eds.), *Classical Arabic Philosophy, an anthology of sources* (pp. 179-186). Indianapolis, IN: Hackett.

Journal entry (option 3): Give your thoughts on the flying man thought experiment and whether you think it works in establishing that we have a soul

Week 5 – Happiness and emotional wellbeing

Sept 19, Monday

Medieval Muslim conceptions of happiness and wellbeing

Al Kindi (2007/9th century AD) On the means of dispelling sorrow in: J. McGinnis & D.C. Reissman (Eds.), *Classical Arabic Philosophy, an anthology of sources* (pp. 23-35). Indianapolis, IN: Hackett.

Sept 21, Wednesday

Happiness and wellbeing in contemporary philosophy

Sizer, Laura (2010). Good and good for you: An affect theory of happiness. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 80(1), 133-163.

Commentary (option 1): Write a 1000-word commentary on al-Kindi's means of dispelling sorrow

II Soul and self

Week 6 – The soul and the self

Sept 26, Monday

The theory of the self (atman) and personhood in Vedic India

Excerpt from the Upanishads

Sept 28, Wednesday

No class

Journal entry option 4: What is a self?

Week 7 – the soul and the self (continued)

Oct 3, Monday

The Buddhist no-self theory

Pesala, Bhikkhu, ed. (1991) 2001. *Milindapañha*. The debate of King Milinda (chariot dialogue). The new revised edition. Penang: Inner Path.

Oct 5, Wednesday

Yogacara philosophy of mind

Asaṅga. 2019. *Mahāyānasamgraha* III.7. In *A compendium of the Mahāyāna: Asaṅga's Mahāyānasamgraha and its Indian and Tibetan commentaries*, vol. 1 of 3, translated by Karl Brunnholzl. Boulder, CO: Snow Lion, plus commentary by Bryce Huebner on the rope and the snake.

Commentary (option 2): Write a 1000-word commentary on the chariot dialogue.

III The different mind

Week 8 – the puzzle of other minds

Oct 10, Monday

Can we know that fish are happy?

Zhuangzi (4th c BCE/2013) The happiness of fish, Excerpt from Burton-Watson (trans.), *The complete works of Zhuangzi* (book 17). New York: Columbia University Press.

Oct 12, Wednesday

Other minds and what they perceive

Nagel, Thomas (1974). What is it like to be a bat? *Philosophical Review*, 83(4), 435-450.

Optional: Akins, Kathleen (1993). What is it like to be boring and myopic. In: *Dennett and his Critics*, 124-160.

Journal entry (option 5): Can Zhuangzi know what it's like to be a fish? Can you know what a cat feels like?

Week 9 – Expertise and skill

Oct 17, Monday

Skill in ancient Daoist philosophy

Zhuangzi (4th c BCE/2013) The Butcher and the swimmer, Excerpts from Burton-Watson (trans.), *The complete works of Zhuangzi* (books 3 and 19). New York: Columbia University Press.

Oct 19, Wednesday

Skill in contemporary philosophy of mind

Fridland, Ellen (2017). Skill and motor control: Intelligence all the way down. *Philosophical studies*, 174(6), 1539-1560

Optional: Williamson, T., & Stanley, J. (2001). Knowing how. *The Journal of Philosophy*, 98(8).

Commentary (option 3): Discuss the butcher and swimmer and what this says about skill

Submit your midterm paper by OCTOBER 19, 5 PM

Fall mid-term grades due by OCTOBER 25, 5 PM

IV Emotions and interrelatedness

Week 10 - Moral foundations theory

Oct 24, Monday

Mengzi's moral sprouts theory

Van Norden, Bryan W., trans. 2008. Mengzi book 2A in *Mengzi: With selections from traditional commentaries*, 45–46. Indianapolis

Oct 26, Wednesday

Contemporary moral foundations theory

Haidt, J., & Joseph, C. (2004). Intuitive ethics: How innately prepared intuitions generate culturally variable virtues. *Daedalus*, 133(4), 55-66.

Also have a look at: Curry, Oliver (2019). What's wrong with moral foundations theory?

<https://behavioralscientist.org/whats-wrong-with-moral-foundations-theory-and-how-to-get-moral-psychology-right/>

Journal entry option 6: Does morality require that we have empathy?

Commentary (option 4): Write a commentary on the child at the well thought experiment. Is Mengzi successful in arguing that it shows empathy lies at the basis of benevolence?

Week 11 – the cognitive science of music

Oct 31, Monday

Xunzi on how music helps to make us human

Xunzi (4th c/2015) Discourse on Music. In: Hutton, E. (trans.) *Xunzi, the complete text*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Nov 2, Wednesday

Contemporary philosophy of mind perspectives on music

Krueger, J. (2014). Affordances and the musically extended mind. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 4, 1003.

Journal entry 7: What role does music play in your life, and can you find connections to Krueger or Xunzi's thoughts on this?

Week 12 – Empathy and sympathy

Nov 7, Monday

Wang, Yangming (1527/2014). Questions on the Great Learning. In: J. Tiwald & B. Van Norden (Eds.), *Readings in later Chinese philosophy*. Han Dynasty to the 20th Century, pp. 238-250. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett.

Nov 9, Wednesday

Bloom, Paul (2017). Empathy and its discontents. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 21(1), 24-31.
de Waal, Franz B. (2012). The antiquity of empathy. *Science*, 336(6083), 874-876.

Commentary (option 5): Discuss Wang's Questions on the Great learning

Journal entry 8: What do you think of Wang's views on genuine knowledge?

Week 13 – The mind situated in its environment (Zen Buddhism)

Nov 14, Monday

Skillful means and the buddha nature

Selected koans and poems from Zen Buddhism

Nov 16, Wednesday

Zen gardens

Chung, Julianne (2018). Moral cultivation: Japanese gardens, personal ideals, and ecological citizenship. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 76(4), 507-518.

Journal entry 9: Do an everyday activity mindfully e.g., running (if you normally run!) or chores, or cooking. Describe what is happening when you do it in your mind making some reference to Zen Buddhism.

Week 14 – panpsychism and Native American philosophies

Nov 21, Monday

Native American philosophy, Panpsychism and Indigenous philosophies of mind
Qitsualik, Rachel (2013). Inummariik: Self-sovereignty in classic Inuit thought. In S. Nickels, K. Kelley, C. Grable, M. Lougheed, & J. Kuptana (Eds.), *Nilliajut: Inuit perspectives on security, patriotism and sovereignty* (pp. 23-33). Ottawa: Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami.

Salmón, Enrique (2000). Kincentric ecology: Indigenous perceptions of the human–nature relationship. *Ecological Applications*, 10(5), 1327-1332.

Nov 23, No class (Thanksgiving)

Journal entry 10: How would you describe your relationship to the natural world?

Weeks 15-16 – Lightning talks

Nov 28 (Monday) and Nov 30 (Wednesday)

Dec 5 (Monday) and Dec 7 (Wednesday)

Sign up for one of these 4 days (there's a fixed number of slots per day, so first-come first served. Sign up sheet will go up in advance and I'll let you know when)

Prepare a short presentation of no longer than 5 minutes. I will cut you off at 7 minutes, so as to allow equal time for everyone (but preferably you have ended your talk by then)

END OF CLASS

Final paper due Dec 15, final grades due by 5 PM, Dec 20

Policy Statements Issued by SLU

Disability Accommodations

Students with a documented disability who wish to request academic accommodations must formally register their disability with the University. Once successfully registered, students also must notify their course instructor that they wish to use their approved accommodations in the course.

Please contact the Center for Accessibility and Disability Resources (CADR) to schedule an appointment to discuss accommodation requests and eligibility requirements. Most students on the St. Louis campus will contact CADR, located in the Student Success Center and available by email at accessibility_disability@slu.edu or by phone at [314.977.3484](tel:314.977.3484). Once approved, information about a student's eligibility for academic accommodations will be shared with course instructors by email from CADR and within the instructor's official course roster. Students who do not have a documented disability but who think they may have one also are encouraged to contact CADR. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries.

Title IX

Saint Louis University and its faculty are committed to supporting our students and seeking an environment that is free of bias, discrimination, and harassment. If you have encountered any form of sexual harassment, including sexual assault, stalking, domestic or dating violence, we encourage you to report this to the University. If you speak with a faculty member about an incident that involves a Title IX matter, **that faculty member must notify SLU's Title IX Coordinator and share the basic facts of your experience.** This is true even if you ask the faculty member not to disclose the incident. The Title IX Coordinator will then be available to assist you in understanding all of your options and in connecting you with all possible resources on and off campus.

Anna Kratky is the Title IX Coordinator at Saint Louis University (DuBourg Hall, room 36; anna.kratky@slu.edu; 314-977-3886). If you wish to speak with a confidential source, you may contact the counselors at the University Counseling Center at 314-977-TALK or make an anonymous report through SLU's Integrity Hotline by calling 1-877-525-5669 or online at <http://www.lighthouse-services.com/slu>. To view SLU's policies, and for resources, please visit the following web addresses: <https://www.slu.edu/about/safety/sexual-assault-resources/index.php> and <https://www.slu.edu/general-counsel>.

IMPORTANT UPDATE: SLU's Title IX Policy (formerly called the Sexual Misconduct Policy) has been significantly revised to adhere to a new federal law governing Title IX that was released on May 6, 2020. Please take a moment to review the new policy and information at the following web

address: <https://www.slu.edu/about/safety/sexual-assault-resources/index.php>. Please contact the Anna Kratky, the Title IX Coordinator, with any questions or concerns.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is honest, truthful and responsible conduct in all academic endeavors. The mission of Saint Louis University is “the pursuit of truth for the greater glory of God and for the service of humanity.” Accordingly, all acts of falsehood demean and compromise the corporate endeavors of teaching, research, health care, and community service through which SLU fulfills its mission. The University strives to prepare students for lives of personal and professional integrity, and therefore regards all breaches of academic integrity as matters of serious concern. The full University-level Academic Integrity Policy can be found on the Provost's Office website at: https://www.slu.edu/provost/policies/academic-and-course/policy_academic-integrity_6-26-2015.pdf.

Additionally, each SLU College, School, and Center has its own academic integrity policies, available on their respective websites.

Mandatory Syllabus Statement on Face Masks (2022-2023)

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, key safeguards like face masks have allowed SLU to safely maintain in-person learning. If public health conditions and local, state, and federal restrictions demand it, the University may require that all members of our campus community wear face masks indoors.

Therefore, any time a University-level face mask requirement is in effect, face masks will be required in this class. This expectation will apply to all students and instructors, unless a medical condition warrants an exemption from the face mask requirement (see below).

When a University-wide face mask requirement is in effect, the following will apply:

- Students who attempt to enter a classroom without wearing masks will be asked by the instructor to put on their masks prior to entry. Students who remove their masks during a class session will be asked by the instructor to resume wearing their masks.
- Students and instructors may remove their masks briefly to take a sip of water but should replace masks immediately. The consumption of food will not be permitted.
- Students who do not comply with the expectation that they wear a mask in accordance with the University-wide face mask requirement may be subject to disciplinary actions per the rules, regulations, and policies of Saint Louis University, including but not limited to those outlined in the *Student Handbook*. Non-compliance with this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including any of the following:

- dismissal from the course(s)
- removal from campus housing (if applicable)
- dismissal from the University
- To immediately protect the health and well-being of all students, instructors, and staff, instructors reserve the right to cancel or terminate any class session at which any student fails to comply with a University-wide face mask requirement.

ADA Accommodations for Face Mask Requirements

Saint Louis University is committed to maintaining an inclusive and accessible environment. Individuals who are unable to wear a face mask due to medical reasons should contact the Office of Disability Services (students) or Human Resources (instructors) to initiate the accommodation process identified in the University's [ADA Policy](#). Inquiries or concerns may also be directed to the [Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity](#). Notification to instructors of SLU-approved ADA accommodations should be made in writing prior to the first class session in any term (or as soon thereafter as possible).

Mandatory Syllabus Statement on In-Person Class Attendance and Participation (until further notice)

The health and well-being of SLU's students, staff, and faculty are critical concerns, as is the quality of our learning environments. Accordingly, the following University policy statements on in-person class attendance are designed to preserve and advance the collective health and well-being of our institutional constituencies and to create the conditions in which all students have the opportunity to learn and successfully complete their courses.

1. Students who exhibit any [potential COVID-19 symptoms](#) (those that cannot be attributed to some other medical condition the students are known to have, such as allergies, asthma, etc.) shall absent themselves from any in-person class attendance or in-person participation in any class-related activity until they have been evaluated by a qualified medical official. Students should contact the [University Student Health Center](#) for immediate assistance.
2. Students (whether exhibiting any of potential COVID-19 symptoms or not, and regardless of how they feel) who are under either an isolation or quarantine directive issued by a qualified health official must absent themselves from all in-person course activities per the stipulations of the isolation or quarantine directive.
3. Students are responsible for notifying their instructor of an absence as far in advance as possible; when advance notification is not possible, students are responsible for notifying each instructor as soon after the absence as possible. Consistent with the [University Attendance Policy](#), students also are responsible for all material covered in class and must work with the instructor to complete any required work. In situations where students must be absent for an extended period of time due to COVID-19 isolation or quarantine, they also must work with the instructor to determine the best way to maintain progress in the course as they are able based on their health situation.
4. Consistent with the [University Attendance Policy](#), students may be asked to provide medical documentation when a medical condition impacts a student's ability to attend and/or participate in class for an extended period of time.

5. As a temporary amendment to the current [University Attendance Policy](#), all absences due to illness or an isolation/quarantine directive issued by a qualified health official, or due to an adverse reaction to a COVID-19 vaccine, shall be considered “Authorized” absences