

PHIL451 – PHILOSOPHY OF MIND

Winter 2024-2025, Term 2

1. CONTACT

INSTRUCTOR

Name: Dr. Aaron Henry

Lecture Time: Tues & Thurs 11am-12:30pm

Lecture Location: LASR 104

Office: Over Zoom.

<https://ubc.zoom.us/j/67721810069?pwd=xxkBZldXMSKfyv8qRLPhLMFCICyNQ1.1>

Office hours: Mon 10-11am; Thurs 1:30-2:30pm

Email: aaron.henry@ubc.ca

E-mail policy: E-mails must be sent from your UBC e-mail address and must include the course code (PHIL451) in the subject line. E-mails are for administrative purposes only – questions about course material will be addressed during office hours. I aim to reply to e-mails within one or two business days.

TEACHING ASSISTANT

Name: Tyeson Davies Barton

Email: tdaviesb@mail.ubc.ca

2. COURSE

OVERVIEW

This course provides an advanced introduction to contemporary work on the ‘mind-body problem.’ This is the problem of understanding the metaphysical relationship between the mental and the physical. Our discussion will be organized around the thesis of ‘physicalism’: the thesis that, in a sense to be made precise, everything is physical. We will begin by asking how best to formulate the thesis of physicalism, focusing on what the physicalist means by ‘everything’ and what they mean by ‘physical.’ Having done so, we will turn to the topic of *mental causation*. According to many physicalists, the reality of mental causation provides a powerful source of support for their position. Our goal will be to understand why they have thought this and assess whether they are right. After considering debates about mental causation, we’ll turn to questions about *mental content*, i.e., the ‘aboutness’ of mental states. We will consider some influential physicalist attempts to explain mental content as well as the principal challenges that have dogged physicalist accounts of mental content. From content, we turn finally to *consciousness*. Here, we’ll consider the arguments that contemporary ‘dualists’ have offered for believing that the existence of consciousness is inconsistent with physicalism, as well as the main ways physicalists have attempted to rebut these dualist arguments. In the time that we have left, we’ll examine some historically neglected views of the mind-body relationship that have been receiving increased attention recently. We’ll discuss: ‘mysterianism’ (the view that the relation between consciousness and the physical lies forever beyond the cognitive grasp of humans); ‘illusionism’ (the view that consciousness is illusory); ‘panpsychism’ (the view that mind or consciousness is somehow woven into the physical fabric of the cosmos); and even some varieties of ‘idealism’ (the view that everything, including the physical cosmos, is a mental construction).

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

A primary objective of any philosophy course is skill development. Some of the skills you will be developing in this course include:

- ability to read, analyze, and critically assess a philosophical text;
- grasp of some of the central problems and controversies in contemporary philosophy of mind.

EXPECTATIONS

What I expect from you:

- to attend lectures;
- to come to lecture on time and prepared to discuss assigned readings;
- to complete assignments on time and according to the instructions;
- to treat your peers with respect;
- to ask questions and seek help when you don't understand something;
- to take responsibility for your own learning.

What you can expect from me:

- to come prepared for each lecture;
- to promote a positive and stimulating learning environment;
- to provide support throughout the term;
- to give constructive feedback on your written work;
- to treat you with respect;
- to think carefully about your questions and make a serious effort to answer them.

TEXTS

All other readings will be available through the course website (see §4 for details)

3. ASSESSMENT

Short reading responses	(10% of final)	Due: Last day of month
Short essay (1500 words)	(25% of final)	Due: Feb. 14 th 11:59pm
Long essay (2000-2500 words)	(35% of final)	Due: Apr 8 th 11:59pm
Final Exam	(30% of final)	TBD

Short reading responses are low stakes written reflections on assigned readings. They are graded on a pass/fail basis and should not exceed 500 words. Whereas your essays should be polished and organized systematically, these can be more exploratory: you are writing in order to think through an issue you found interesting or challenging. You must complete 3 responses to receive full marks and are due monthly. (So, the first reflection is due at the end of January; the second, at the end of February; and the third, at the end of March.)

4. POLICIES

COURSE WEBSITE

All announcements and course documents will be posted on Canvas. To access this site, go to <https://canvas.ubc.ca/> and login with your CWLid and password. PHL451H will appear under the “courses” portion of the welcome page, on the left hand side. Click on the link to access our site. You should check this site regularly for updates.

LATENESS

Assignments will be penalized 1/3 a letter grade for each day that they are late. Extensions may be granted if extraordinary circumstances are documented, but students should contact me to request an extension before the due date. Any assignment that is more than 5 days late will not be accepted.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic integrity is essential to the pursuit of learning and scholarship in a university, and to ensuring that a degree from the University of British Columbia is a strong signal of each student's individual academic achievement. Accordingly, the University treats cases of cheating and plagiarism very seriously. Plagiarism,

which is intellectual theft, occurs where an individual submits or presents the oral or written work of another person as his or her own. Scholarship quite properly rests upon examining and referring to the thoughts and writings of others. However, when another person's words (i.e. phrases, sentences, or paragraphs), ideas, or entire works are used, the author must be acknowledged in the text, in footnotes, in endnotes, or in another accepted form of academic citation. Where direct quotations are made, they must be clearly delineated (for example, within quotation marks or separately indented). Failure to provide proper attribution is plagiarism because it represents someone else's work as one's own. Plagiarism should not occur in submitted drafts or final works. A student who seeks assistance from a tutor or other scholastic aids must ensure that the work submitted is the student's own. Students are responsible for ensuring that any work submitted does not constitute plagiarism. Students who are in any doubt as to what constitutes plagiarism should consult their instructor before handing in any assignments. A link about Academic Misconduct:

<http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/Vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,54,111,959>

GENERATIVE AI TOOLS

If you choose to use Generative AI tools (ChatGPT, Microsoft Copilot, Gemini, etc.) when preparing an assignment for this class, all uses must be documented in an appendix to your assignment submission that identifies the following information:

- what tool(s) were used
- how they were used
- how the results from the AI were incorporated into the submitted work (including all prompts and responses used)

For guidance on how to cite Generative AI tools in various academic citation styles, please refer to the UBC Libraries' guide for doing so: <https://guides.library.ubc.ca/GenAI/cite>

Important notes: Generative AI should *not* be relied upon as an authoritative source for information, interpretation, or analysis. Failure to adequately document Generative AI use and failure to cite Generative AI sources will be treated as an academic offense.

If you have any questions about this policy, please feel free to speak to me in class or in office hours.

ACCESSIBILITY NEEDS

The University of British Columbia is committed to accessibility. If you have a disability that may interfere with your ability to successfully take this course, then please email me in the first few weeks. You must also register with Access and Diversity, so that they can help provide support (grant extra time on exam, note taker, etc.):

<https://students.ubc.ca/about-student-services/access-diversity>

5. SUPPORT

ADVICE

The term goes *very* quickly! It's therefore important to keep up with the readings and to attend lectures. If you feel you need additional help with any of the course material, please don't wait to contact me.

INTERNET RESOURCES

Here is a link to information about the University of British Columbia's writing resources:

<https://writing.library.ubc.ca/>

Here are links to information about how to write a good philosophy paper:

<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>

<http://www.public.asu.edu/~dportmor/tips.pdf>

<http://catpages.nwmissouri.edu/m/rfield/guide.html>

6. SCHEDULE

Please note that this schedule may change at the instructor's discretion to suit the pace of the course and the interests of the students. Please also note that all readings are to be read *before the class* that will take place on the date listed.

DATE	TOPIC	READING
1/7	Introduction to the course	Philip Goff, "Galileo's Big Mistake"
Formulating 'physicalism'		
1/9	The completeness question	Stoljar, "Physicalism" (SEP entry), §§1-3; Seager, <i>Theories of Consciousness</i> , pp. 7-13
1/14	The condition question	Montero, "The Body Problem" Stoljar, "Physicalism (SEP entry), §5.4 Optional: Montero, "Post-physicalism"
Arguing for physicalism: the problem of mental causation		
1/16	The 'causal argument' for physicalism (<i>a.k.a.</i> , the 'causal exclusion argument')	Papineau, "The Case for Materialism" Seager, <i>Theories of Consciousness</i> , pp. 13-17 Optional: Kim, excerpt from <i>Physicalism, or Something Near Enough</i>
1/21	Responding to the causal argument: Embracing overdetermination?	Bennett, "Exclusion Again" Optional: Bennett, "Why the Exclusion Problem Seems Intractable, and How, Just Maybe, to Tract it" Wilson, "How Superduper does a Physicalist Supervenience Need to be?"
1/23	Responding to the causal argument: What role for the conservation laws?	Gibb, "Closure Principles and the Laws of Conservation of Energy and Momentum" Optional: Papineau, "Appendix: The History of the Completeness of Physics"; Lowe, "Causal Closure Principles and Emergentism" (Chapter 2 of <i>Personal Agency</i>)
1/28	Can interactionist dualists embrace the causal completeness of the physical?	Gibb, "Defending Dualism" Optional: Gibb, "Mental Causation and Double Prevention" Lowe "Self, Agency, and Mental Causation" (excerpt from <i>Personal Agency</i>)
From Causation to content		
1/30	Naturalizing intentionality (I)	Morgan & Piccinini, "Towards a Cognitive Neuroscience of Intentionality" Shea, "Naturalizing Intentionality" Optional: Michael Rescorla, "The Computational Theory of Mind" (SEP); Michael Rescorla, "The Language of Thought Hypothesis" (SEP); Neander & Schulte – "Teleological Theories of Mental Content" (SEP)
2/4	Naturalizing intentionality (II)	No new reading
Arguing against physicalism: The 'hard problem' of consciousness		
2/6	The modal argument (Part 1)	Saul Kripke, excerpt from <i>Naming and Necessity</i> Optional:

		Christopher Hill, “Conceivability, Possibility, and the Mind-Body Problem”
2/11	The modal argument (Part 2)	No new readings
2/13	The knowledge argument	Frank Jackson, “Epiphenomenal Qualia”, and post-script
2/18	Reading week	
2/20	Reading week	
2/25	The zombie argument	David Chalmers, “Consciousness and Its Place in Nature,” §§1-3, 6, and 9-10
Physicalist responses to the hard problem		
2/27	A priori (“Type-A”) physicalism: Robo-Mary	Daniel Dennett, “What RoboMary Knows” Optional: David Chalmers, “Consciousness and Its Place in Nature,” §4
3/4	A priori (“Type-A”) physicalism: the ‘abilities’ reply	David Lewis, “What Experience Teaches”; postscript to “Mad Pain and Martian Pain”
3/6	A priori (“Type-A”) physicalism: reductive representationalism and illusionism	Frank Jackson, “The Knowledge Argument, Diaphanousness, Representationalism”; Keith Frankish, “An Illusionist Theory of Consciousness”
3/11	A posteriori (“Type-B”) physicalism	Katalin Balog, ‘Acquaintance and the mind-body problem’ Optional: Brian Loar, ‘Phenomenal States’ David Chalmers, “Consciousness and Its Place in Nature,” §5
3/13	Against a posteriori (“Type-B”) physicalism	David Chalmers, “Phenomenal Concepts and the Explanatory Gap” Optional: Philip Goff, “A Posteriori Physicalists Get Our Phenomenal Concepts Wrong”
3/18	A posteriori (<i>a.k.a.</i> , ‘type-B’) physicalists strike back?	Katalin Balog, “In Defense of the Phenomenal Concept Strategy” Optional: Janet Levin, “Once More Unto the Breach: Type B Physicalism, Phenomenal Concepts, and the Epistemic Gap”
Neglected alternatives to the mind-body problem		
3/20	Consciousness and ignorance	Stoljar, “The Epistemic Approach”
3/25	Might consciousness be a mystery? (‘Mysterianism’)	McGinn, “Can We Solve the Mind-Body Problem?”
3/27	Might consciousness be the intrinsic nature of the physical? (‘Russellian Monism’)	Philip Goff and Sam Coleman “Russellian Monism”; Optional: Hedda Hassel Mørch, “The Argument for Panpsychism from Experience of Causation”; Daniel Stoljar, “Two Conceptions of the Physical”
4/1	Might consciousness be all there is? (Monistic idealism)	Miri Albahari, “Panpsychism and the Inner-Outer Gap Problem” Miri Albahari, “Is Universal Consciousness Fit for Ground?” Optional: Miri Albahari, “Perennial Idealism: A Mystical Solution to the Mind- Body Problem”
4/3	Catch up and review	No new readings
4/8	Catch up and review	No new readings

