

Phil 300

Topics in Philosophy: Philosophy of Mind

Instructor: Jack Temkin

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Office Hours: 10:00 – 11:00 M, W, F and by appointment

Course Objectives

This course will focus on a central issue in the philosophy of mind: the mind-body problem. We will examine a variety of approaches to the question of the relationship between the mind and the body (in this context, identity counts as a relationship and so does the view that only one of the relata in this “relationship” actually exists). Although we will be reading Descartes’ classic formulation of a once (and perhaps, in some circles, still) dominant view, the focus of this course will be on contemporary approaches to the mind-body problem in what is broadly referred to as the “analytic” tradition. Among the views to be examined are: Cartesian dualism, logical behaviorism, central state materialism, and eliminative materialism. In addition to these views on the relationship between mind and body, we will also take up the issue of personal identity. While this is often considered a distinct issue in the philosophy of mind, I believe that the questions raised in addressing it are relevant to the mind-body problem more narrowly construed.

Text:

Brian Cooney, *The Place of Mind*, Wadsworth Publishing.

Outline of Course Content

I. Cartesian Dualism

A. Selections from Descartes : Cooney, pp. 11–28

II. The Ghost in the Machine

A. Gilbert Ryle, *Descartes’ Myth*: Cooney, pp. 31–41

B. Norman Malcolm, *Our Knowledge of Other Minds*: Cooney, pp. 42–49

III. The Identity Thesis

A. U. T. Place, *Is Consciousness a Brain Process?*: Cooney, pp. 77–84

B. J.J.C. Smart, *Sensations and Brain Processes*: Cooney, pp. 85–95

C. Saul Kripke, *The Identity Relation* : Cooney, pp. 96–110

IV. Eliminative Materialism:

- A. Richard Rorty, *Mind-Body Identity, Privacy, and Categories*: Cooney, pp. 111–129
- B. Paul M. Churchland, *Eliminative Materialism*: Cooney, pp. 130–134

V. Selves:

- A. John Locke, *Of Identity and Diversity*: Cooney, pp. 428–433
- B. David Hume, *Of Personal Identity*: Cooney, pp. 434–443
- C. Derek Parfit, *Reasons and Persons* (Selections): Cooney, pp. 444–453
- D. Thomas Nagel, *Brain Bisection and the Unity of Consciousness*: Cooney, pp. 454–465

Course Requirements

Student performance will be evaluated on the basis of a mid-term paper, a final paper, and class participation. Each will count as one third of the final grade.

Disability Statement

Students who believe that they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact Disability Support Services at (970) 351-2289 as soon as possible to ensure that accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion.