Philosophy of Mind
PHI 218
Fall 2017

Professor: David W. Goldberg
Office: Patterson 319
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Meeting Times: 2:00-3:00 MWF
Meeting Room: Patterson 207
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Course Description:

What is a mind and is it a terrible thing to waste? The philosophic tradition has constructed a dichotomy of inner and outer whose roots run deep. Ever since that first dualist surfaced in antiquity, we have been sitting across from each other attempting to bridge the gap that divides us: clarity and privileged access on one side, opaqueness and obscurity on the other. We each have privileged access to our own mental ruminations, but can only bridge the abyss between the other via behavioral experiences and communication. This course will be an examination of the philosophical issues that surface surrounding the question of our own minds.

Our first venture into the enigmatic arena that is mind will entail an examination of the fledgling steps towards dualism that the Greeks of antiquity made. We will begin with early Homeric monism in which gods control humans; progress through philosophical hylozoism in which the matter is alive, and then see its progression into the beginnings of dualism, which culminates with a full-blown bifurcation as reflected in the writings of Plato (whose influence cannot be underestimated).

With this Greek foundation in place, we will then proceed to conceptions of mind that have grounded our Western approach since Descartes established modern substance dualism that set the agenda for our contemporary examination of mind. We will focus on Descartes’ major work Meditations on First Philosophy, a work in which he wrestles with numerous questions while attempting to ground a revolution in science and philosophy, including questions surrounding the issue of mind. What resulted was a revolution whose repercussions, much like those of the big bang, are still reverberating today. Descartes’ dualistic ontology, an ontology predicated on the existence of two primary kinds of being (res extensa and res cogitans), initiated discourse among his contemporaries that will guide our analysis of his solution.

This foundation will allow us to traverse the diverse positions on mind that have developed in Philosophy during the 20th century, as most of our modern perspective is a derivative from one or the other of these foundations. Using Pete Mandik’s This is Philosophy of Mind: An Introduction and related articles, we will examine contemporary perspectives on mind including identity theory, functionalism, eliminative materialism, computational theories of mind, and others.

If time permits, to contrast our Western interpretation of mind, we will look at a non-Western perspective, the Buddhist notion of mind as reflected in Japanese Zen Buddhist
thought, and to conclude the course we will look at the legal and ethical ramifications of the modern notion of *mind*. This will include discussions on the extent to which one is responsible for one’s actions given a potential radical materialism.

By the end of the course students should be able to express the fundamental philosophical perspectives on mind, including critiques of these positions, and be able to explain the historical development of our modern notion of mind, including the genealogical sources.

**Required Text:**

*This is Philosophy of Mind: An Introduction.* Mandik, Pete. John Wiley & Sons, Inc. 2014.

Assorted handouts and electronic sources comprised of journal articles and internet material.

**Exams and Grading:**

Grading will be accomplished via 4 short papers.

**Participation:** You are responsible for coming to class prepared to actively contribute to discussion of the topics at hand. The best way to prepare is to read the assigned material thoroughly. Thorough reading is aided by note-taking: write down questions that occur to you as you read, rephrase the author’s arguments in your own words to ensure that you understand them, etc. Bring these notes to class so you can refer to them during discussion. Note that the material you will be reading is quite challenging, and a single surface reading will not suffice. Be prepared to read each selection two or three times. It is absolutely crucial that you keep up with the readings to enhance the quality of class discussions and to facilitate comprehension. **The quality of your reading will directly and substantially affect your course grade.**

**Response papers:** You will be responsible for 4 short papers that will be designed to illicit responses from you in regards to the pieces we are reading. These will each be between 700-1500 words in length, not including any citation material.

**Academic integrity** is an issue that I take very seriously. Philosophy papers often rely on other sources for information and substantiation of a position; hence you must be very careful to properly cite your use of a passage or thought derived from another source. For information on plagiarism see the College Catalogue, or a good writing guidebook such as Diana Hacker *Rules for Writers*. Also, remember that the Internet has made it both easy to find information, as well as to check for sources. Do not think that because you found information at some obscure WEB site that there is no need to reference the material. In an endeavor to educate students on what plagiarism entails, hence reduce the possibility of
plagiarism, I will be using TURNITIN.COM this semester. This is a commercial service that serves two primary purposes: first, it is a useful tool for students to learn about plagiarism as well as pre-screen papers; second, it acts as a search engine to allow faculty to compare student submissions to numerous databases.

For those who need to contact me outside of the normal classroom hours, my office hours will be from 11:00-12:00 MWF. My office is in Patterson Hall, room 319. I also can be reached via e-mail (goldbedw@westminster.edu) and phone (7153).
## Tentative Chronology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Material</th>
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| 1    | Introduction and the Early Greeks.  
Chapter 1: *Meet Your Mind* |
| 2    | Descartes, the foundation for modern dualistic thinking.  
Chapter 2: *Substance Dualism* |
| 3    | Chapter 3: *Property Dualism*  
First short paper |
| 4    | Chapter 4: *Idealism, Solipsism, and Panpsychism* |
| 5    | Chapter 5: *Behaviorism and Other Minds* |
| 6    | Chapter 6: *Mind as Brain* |
| 7    | Chapter 7: *Thinking Machines*  
Second short paper |
| 8    | Chapter 8: *Functionalism* |
| 9    | Chapter 9: *Mental Causation* |
| 10   | Chapter 10: *Eliminative Materialism* |
| 11   | Chapter 11: *Perception, Mental Imagery, and Emotion*  
Third short paper |
| 12   | Chapter 12: *The Will: Willpower and Freedom* |
| 13   | Chapter 13: *Intentionality and Mental Representation* |
| 14   | Chapter 14: *Consciousness and Qualia* |
| 15   | Chapter 15: *Is This the End? Personal Identity, the Self, and Life after Death*  
Fourth short paper |