

PHIL 2640 (VLST 2210)

Introduction to the Philosophy of Mind (Spring 2025)

Tuesdays & Thursdays 12-1 PM

Location Claudia Cohen Hall 401

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Course Description

What are mental states? What do they tell us? In virtue of what do we believe them? What makes them different from each other? What's the relationship between our mental states and our bodily states? How can our mental states make things happen in the world? These are questions in the philosophy of mind. In this course, you will be introduced to key issues in the philosophy of mind: the mind/body problem, the format and content of mental representation, the distinction between mental faculties, the epistemic status and powers of mental states.

Required Texts – on Canvas

Course Requirements and Class Policies

Participation – We expect you to attend every session (lecture AND recitation) having done the readings carefully and to engage in constructive philosophical dialogue. In order to foster participation, the use of **electronics** is strongly discouraged. Electronic devices should stay at a distance from the student at all times and can only be used for reference to readings.

Assignments – In addition to participating in class you are expected to take an in-class midterm on March 25 and complete 4 papers for this class. Each paper will focus on a different philosophical skill:

Paper 1	Writing a thesis
Paper 2	Reconstructing a view
Paper 3.1	Making an argument
Paper 3.2	Developing an objection
Paper 4	Synthesizing all of the above

Late work -- Late papers will be penalized one-third of a letter grade per day. Students can have four free extension days (in total) that they may elect to use at any point during the semester. Further extensions will only be granted for emergencies.

Emails – We will respond to your emails within 48 hours. If you haven't heard from us within this timeframe, nudge us.

Accommodations – You are encouraged to discuss specific needs with you. The university alleges to make reasonable accommodations for persons with documented disabilities through [the Weingarten Center](#).

Academic integrity – You are encouraged to discuss course material and paper ideas with your classmates. Be sure to cite their contributions as well as philosophical work you reference. Review [the university's code on academic integrity](#).

Grading

Recitation participation: 10%

In-class midterm: 30%, will take place on Mar. 25

Papers: 60%

Paper 1: 0%, due Feb. 2 midnight

Paper 2: 15%, due Feb. 23 midnight

Paper 3, 1st sub: 10%, due Apr. 6 midnight

Paper 3, 2nd sub: 10%, due Apr. 20 midnight

Paper 4: 25%, due May 7 midnight

Course Schedule

Minds: What are minds?

- Jan. 16 Descartes, Meditation 6; Correspondence with Princess Elizabeth
- Jan. 21 Locke, *Essay on Human Understanding* (excerpts); Ryle, "Descartes' myth"
- Jan. 23 Nagel, "What is it like to be a bat?"
- Jan. 28 Jackson, "What Mary didn't know"
- Jan. 30 Lewis, "What experience teaches"

Representation: How do minds represent?

- Feb. 4 Fodor, The mind-body problem
- Feb. 6 Dretske, "If you can't make one, you don't know how it works"
- Feb. 11 Block, "The mind as the software of the brain"
(Read 11.3-5 for Feb. 13)
- Feb. 13 Block (11.3-5); Fodor, "Why there still has to be a language of thought"

Perception: How do we come to know the world by perception?

- Feb. 18 Cohen, "Perception and computation"
- Feb. 20 Hatfield, "Psychological experiments and phenomenal experience in size and shape constancy"
- Feb. 25 Block, "Seeing-as in the light of vision science"; Burge, "Reply to Block"
- Feb. 27 Burge, "Iconic representation"

Borders: What's the difference between seeing and thinking?

- Mar. 4 Mandelbaum, "Seeing and conceptualizing"
- Mar. 6 Fodor, selections from *Modularity of Mind*
- Mar. 18 Firestone & Scholl, "Cognition does not affect perception"
- Mar. 20 Green, "The perception-cognition border: a case for architectural division"
- Mar. 25 No reading: in-class midterm
- Mar. 27 Siegel & Byrne, "Rich or thin?"

Memory: What is the relation between our memories and past events?

- Apr. 1 Martin & Deutscher, "Remembering"
- Apr. 3 De Brigard, "The nature of memory traces"
- Apr. 8 Anscombe, "Memory, 'experience', and causation"
- Apr. 10 Michaelian, "Confabulating as unreliable imagining"

Emotions: Are emotions of the mind?

- Apr. 15 Prinz, "Embodied appraisals"
- Apr. 17 Solomon, "Emotions and choice"
- Apr. 22 Griffiths, "Emotions as natural and normative kinds"
- Apr. 24 Taylor, "Emotions, concepts and the indeterminacy of natural kinds"
- Apr. 29 No assigned reading

Weekly checklist

Week	Read	Turn in
0: 01/16	<input type="checkbox"/> Descartes, Meditation 6 <input type="checkbox"/> Correspondence with Princess Elizabeth	
1: 01/21 & 23	<input type="checkbox"/> Locke, <i>Essay on Human Understanding</i> (excerpts) <input type="checkbox"/> Ryle, "Descartes' myth" <input type="checkbox"/> Nagel, "What is it like to be a bat?"	
2: 01/28 & 30	<input type="checkbox"/> Jackson, "What Mary didn't know" <input type="checkbox"/> Lewis, "What experience teaches"	<input type="checkbox"/> Paper 1 (Feb. 2, midnight)
3: 02/04 & 6	<input type="checkbox"/> Fodor, The mind-body problem <input type="checkbox"/> Dretske, "If you can't make one, you don't know how it works"	
4: 02/11 & 20	<input type="checkbox"/> Block, "The mind as the software of the brain" (except 11.3-5) <input type="checkbox"/> Block (11.3-5) <input type="checkbox"/> Fodor, "Why there still has to be a language of thought"	
5: 02/18 & 20	<input type="checkbox"/> Cohen, "Perception and computation" <input type="checkbox"/> Hatfield, "Psychological experiments and phenomenal experience in size and shape constancy"	<input type="checkbox"/> Paper 2 (Feb. 23, midnight)
6: 02/25 & 27	<input type="checkbox"/> Block, "Seeing-as in the light of vision science" <input type="checkbox"/> Burge, "Reply to Block" <input type="checkbox"/> Burge, "Iconic representation"	
7: 03/04 & 6	<input type="checkbox"/> Mandelbaum, "Seeing and conceptualizing" <input type="checkbox"/> Fodor, selections from <i>Modularity of Mind</i>	
	Spring break	
8: 03/18 & 20	<input type="checkbox"/> Firestone & Scholl, "Cognition does not affect perception" <input type="checkbox"/> Green, "The perception-cognition border: a case for architectural division"	
9: 03/25 & 27	<input type="checkbox"/> Siegel & Byrne, "Rich or thin?"	<input type="checkbox"/> Midterm (in-class)
10: 04/01 & 3	<input type="checkbox"/> Martin & Deutscher, "Remembering" <input type="checkbox"/> De Brigard, "The nature of memory traces"	<input type="checkbox"/> Paper 3 (Apr. 6, midnight)
11: 04/8 & 10	<input type="checkbox"/> Anscombe, "Memory, 'experience', and causation" <input type="checkbox"/> Michaelian, "Confabulating as unreliable imagining"	
12: 04/15 & 17	<input type="checkbox"/> Prinz, "Embodied appraisals" <input type="checkbox"/> Solomon, "Emotions and choice"	<input type="checkbox"/> Paper 3 (Apr. 20, midnight)
13: 04/22 & 24	<input type="checkbox"/> Griffiths, "Emotions as natural and normative kinds" <input type="checkbox"/> Taylor, "Emotions, concepts and the indeterminacy of natural kinds"	