

Mind in Modern Philosophy

PHIL 414/614 | W 1:30-3:20

Instructors: Kenneth Winkler and Bridger Ehli

Location: 220 York Street, room 100

Office Hours: TBA

Course Description

This course will take up a range of problems in the philosophy of mind that arose or intensified in the early modern period and persist in the present day. Could a creature able to feel and think be nothing but “a system of matter, fitly disposed,” as John Locke for example wondered? What is it that makes me the same person over time—if, indeed, I really am the same person over time? If my sensations are inner states, how do they manage to represent an objective world that lies beyond me? Each unit of the course will pair readings by early modern writers, including Descartes, Spinoza, Anne Conway, Malebranche, Margaret Cavendish, Locke, Berkeley, and Thomas Reid, with essays by recent writers on the same themes. Recent authors will include Saul Kripke, Donald Davidson, Jaegwon Kim, David Chalmers, Susanna Siegel, and Susanna Schellenberg. Topics will include the viability of dualism; the possibility of thinking matter; the comparative advantages of psychological and biological accounts of personal identity; and the representation of an external world.

Intended Audience

The intended audience of the course is advanced undergraduates with some previous exposure to the history of modern philosophy and graduate students with interests in philosophy. To enroll in the course, undergraduate students must have taken either PHIL 126 (Introduction to Modern Philosophy) or DRST 004 (Direct Studies: Philosophy). (We will consider petitions from students with equivalent backgrounds.) For graduate students in the Philosophy Department, the course has no prerequisites.

Assignments and Grading

Those taking the course for credit will be required to make one post per week on a Canvas discussion board. These brief posts might raise a question about the week's readings, make an objection to those readings, or simply flag a point of confusion. These posts will be due before each meeting of the course. Each student will also write a 5-7 page midterm paper. Suggested topics for these papers will be distributed by the instructors. Undergraduate students may request permission to create their own prompt in consultation with one or both instructors. Graduate students may create their own topic without receiving permission from the instructors. Finally, each student will be asked to write a final paper (10-15 pages for undergraduates, 15-20 pages for graduate students). Final papers may develop ideas present in the midterm paper. Grades will be calculated as follows:

15%	Classroom participation
15%	Completion of discussion board posts
30%	Midterm paper
40%	Final paper

Policies

Attendance: Attendance is required and essential to success in the course. Repeated absences will negatively affect your final grade. If you are absent from a class and would like to get caught up, we recommend that you come to office hours or ask a classmate to talk about what you missed.

Academic integrity: The strength of the university depends on academic and personal integrity. One of the most severe violations of academic integrity is plagiarism, which is the use of someone else's work, words, or ideas as if they were your own. Thus, if you use a source for a paper, you must acknowledge it. There is no reason to hide the fact that you have relied on others, for the very idea of writing in a university is to trace your participation in a conversation of scholars. Showing how your ideas derive from and comment on the ideas of others is one of the high achievements of mature academic writing. It would be a mistake to downplay this achievement in an attempt to suggest greater originality. What counts as a source and requires citation is a delicate matter. Some things are clear. For instance, anything derived from readings (including those found on-line), either from the syllabus or outside sources, must be cited. What is not clear is whether ideas presented in lecture, discussed in section, or derived from conversations with faculty, TAs, or other students must be cited. If you are unsure, consult with your instructor or TA. In general, it is better to err on the side of caution and cite sources too much rather than too little. Penalties for plagiarism are severe. Students caught plagiarizing can be subject to lowered or failing grades, as well as suspension or expulsion from the University. For more information, please consult Yale's Academic Integrity Policy.

Accessibility and inclusion: If you have a documented learning disability, please let us know by the end of the first week of class and contact the Student Accessibility Services to make sure your needs are being met. We welcome diverse perspectives on the course's readings and themes. Our primary aim in every meeting will be to join with students in creating an open and inclusive environment for the pursuit of learning and philosophical conversation.

Texts

Students will need to purchase the following texts, available at the Yale Bookstore:

Descartes. *Selected Philosophical Writings*. Cambridge. ISBN: 0521358124.

Spinoza. *Ethics*. Penguin. 0140435719.

Cavendish. *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy*. Hackett. 1624665144

Malebranche. *Philosophical Selections*. Hackett. 087220152X.

Locke. *Essay concerning Human Understanding*. Hackett. 087220216X.

Berkeley. *Philosophical Writings*. Cambridge. 0521707625.

Conway. *Principles of the Most Ancient and Modern Philosophy*. Cambridge. 0521479045.

Reid. *Inquiry and Essays*. Hackett. 0915145855.

All other readings will be made available on Canvas.

Course Schedule

DUALISM

Week 1 René Descartes. Selections from *Meditations on First Philosophy*.

René Descartes. Selections from *Principles of Philosophy Philosophy*.

Princess Elizabeth and René Descartes. Selections from their *Correspondence*.

Alison Simmons. 2017. "Mind-Body Union and the Limits of Cartesian Metaphysics." *Philosophers Imprint* 17 (14): 1-36.

Week 2 Saul Kripke. 1971. "Identity and Necessity." In Milton Munitz (ed.), *Identity and Individuation*. New York: New York University Press.

Richard Rorty. 2020. "Kripke on Mind-Body Identity." In *On Philosophers and Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

MONISM

Week 3 Benedictus de Spinoza. Selections from *Ethics*.

Anne Conway. Selections from *The Principles of the Most Ancient and Modern Philosophy*.

Michael Della Rocca. 2008. Chapters 2 and 3 of *Spinoza*.

Recommended: Karolina Huebner. 2022. "Representation and Mind-Body Identity in Spinoza's Philosophy." *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 60 (1): 47-77.

Week 4 Donald Davidson. 1980. "Mental Events." In *Essays on Actions and Events*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Jaegwon Kim. 1989. "The Myth of Nonreductive Materialism." *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 63 (3): 31-47.

THINKING MATTER

Week 5 John Locke. Selections from the *Essay concerning Human Understanding*.

Samuel Clarke and Anthony Collins. Selections from the *Clarke-Collins Correspondence*.

Margaret Cavendish. Selections from *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy*.

Recommended: Marleen Rozemond. 2009. "Can Matter Think? The Mind-Body Problem in the Clarke-Collins Correspondence." In *Topics in Early Modern Philosophy of Mind*. Edited by Jon Miller. Dordrecht: Springer.

Week 6 Jaegwon Kim. 1999. "Making Sense of Emergence." *Philosophical Studies* 95 (1/2): 3-36.

David Chalmers. 2006. "Strong and Weak Emergence." In *The Re-Emergence of Emergence: The Emergentist Hypothesis from Science to Religion*. Edited by Philip Clayton and Paul Davies. Oxford: Oxford UP.

Galen Strawson. 2006. "Realistic Monism." *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 13 (10-11): 3-31.

PERSONAL IDENTITY

Week 7 John Locke. Selections from the *Essay concerning Human Understanding*.

Catherine Totter Cockburn. Selections from *The Defence of Mr. Locke's Essay of Human Understanding*.

Kenneth Winkler. 1991. "Locke on Personal Identity." *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 29 (2): 201-226.

Recommended: Don Garrett. 2003. "Locke on Personal Identity, Consciousness, and 'Fatal Errors.'" *Philosophical Topics* 31 (1-2): 95-125.

Week 8 David Hume. Selections from the *Treatise of Human Nature*.

David Hume. "Appendix" to the *Treatise of Human Nature*.

Joseph Butler. "Of Personal Identity"

Udo Thiel. Selection from *The Early Modern Subject: Self-Consciousness and Personal Identity from Descartes to Hume*.

Week 9 Derek Parfit. 1971. "Personal Identity." *Philosophical Review* 80 (1): 3-27.

Eric Olson. 1997. Selections from *The Human Animal: Personal Identity without Psychology*.

Recommended: Derek Parfit. 2012. "We Are Not Human Beings." *Philosophical Quarterly* 87 (1): 5-28.

Recommended: Lynn Rudder Baker. 2016. "Animalism vs. Constitutionalism." In *Animalism: New Essays on Persons, Animals, and Identity*. Edited by Stephan Blatti and Paul F. Snowdon. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

THE OBJECTS OF PERCEPTION

- Week 10* Nicolas Malebranche. Selections from the *Search after Truth*.
- Alison Simmons. 2009. "Sensations in a Malebranchean Mind." In *Topics in Early Modern Philosophy of Mind*. Edited by Jon Miller. Dordrecht: Springer
- Walter Ott. 2014. "Malebranche and the Riddle of Sensation" *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 88 (3): 689-712.
- Week 11* George Berkeley. *New Theory of Vision*.
- George Berkeley. *The Theory of Vision Vindicated and Explained*.
- Margaret Atherton. 2005. "Berkeley's Theory of Vision and its Reception." In *The Cambridge Companion to Berkeley*. Edited by Kenneth Winkler. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.
- Week 12* Thomas Reid. Selections from *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*.
- Thomas Reid. Selections from *An Inquiry into the Human Mind*.
- Rebecca Copenhaver. 2010. "Thomas Reid on Acquired Perception." *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 91 (3): 285-312.
- Recommended:* James Van Cleve. 2006. "Reid's Theory of Perception." In *The Cambridge Companion to Reid*. Edited by Terence Cuneo and René van Woudenberg. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.
- Week 13* Susanna Siegel. 2011. Selections from *The Contents of Visual Experience*.
- Alex Byrne. 2009. "Experience and Content." *Philosophical Quarterly* 59 (236): 429-51.
- Susanna Schellenberg. 2011. "Perceptual Content Defended." *Noûs* 45 (4): 714-750.

Recommended: Alex Byrne and Susanna Siegel. 2017. In *Current Controversies in Philosophy of Perception*. Edited by Bence Nanay. London: Routledge.

Recommended: Grace Helton. 2018. "Visually Perceiving the Intentions of Others." *Philosophical Quarterly* 68 (271): 243-64.