



# Philosophy of Mind

Instructor: Linda Lázár

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Office Hours: Mo-Fr 00.00-00.00

Course website: [website.ceu.edu](http://website.ceu.edu)

Classes:

Tue 9.00-10.40 and 15.30-17.10, in Zrínyi 14, 411

## Course description

This is an introductory course to the philosophy of mind, addressing debates in the field from a historical and contemporary perspective. The course focuses on the questions about the nature of the mind within the analytic tradition from the 17th to the 21st century. During the course we will consider problems such as: the ontology of the mind, mental causation and the problem of consciousness. The divide between physicalists and dualists will be approached from a perspective which doesn't exclude the debate between the two sides. We will look at arguments for both physicalist and dualist positions, and consider the problems that apply to both positions. As it is an introductory course, there are no prerequisites to the course, but metaphysics or cognitive science courses can help getting along with the subject matter.

There are seminars and lectures each week.

## Objective

This course will enable students to become familiar with contemporary debates in philosophy of mind. Familiarity with the problems to be discussed during the course is essential for further studies in the philosophy of mind, and forms a basis of many other metaphysical debates. Students will gain confidence in debating philosophical issues in general, and in arguing for philosophy of mind positions in particular.

## Goals

- Students will understand the central problems in contemporary philosophy of mind and will be able to discuss them in a topic-neutral way.
- Students will reflect on the difficulties of formulating arguments within philosophy of mind debates.
- Students will understand the significance of philosophy of mind debates for other metaphysical issues (e.g. the identity of a person and the freedom of the will).
- Students will be able to contribute to philosophy of mind discussions with a coherent perspective and a creative (if necessary, revisionary) approach.

## Learning outcomes

At the end of the course students will be able to...

- explain the difference between dualist and physicalist positions in topic-neutral terminology
- indicate the main problems for both of these positions
- classify physicalist theories
- discuss the main dualist arguments
- evaluate the significance of the easy and the hard problems for consciousness
- explain the different physicalist responses to the knowledge argument
- reflect on how philosophy of mind concepts make use of intuitions and first-person perspective experiences
- demonstrate skills for participation in academic discussions with respect and empathy
- learn how to be critical of an idea, but not of a person
- present their views in a clear manner

## Course calendar and content

Week no.	Topic	Assignments
1	Introduction: Metaphysical preliminaries and mind-body supervenience. Is there a mark of the mental?	
2	Substance dualism	
3	Behaviourism and psycho-neural identity theory	
4	Functionalism	
5	Mental causation: epiphenomenalism	<i>Position paper: physicalism</i>
6	Mental causation: anomalous monism	
7	The easy and the hard problem of consciousness	
8	Intentionality: causal and teleological theories	<i>Position paper: mental causation</i>
9	Intentionality: informational theories	
10	Content externalism	
11	Consciousness: Knowledge argument	
12	Consciousness: Knowledge argument and representationalism	<i>Draft proposal for final paper</i>

## Assignments

2 Position papers

A maximum 1500 words paper on 1) one of the physicalist theories and on 2) one of the problems for mental causation. It should be a short summary of the position/problem and a

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critical assessment of it, arguing for your position on the problem. These assignments should be submitted by the end of the 5th and 8th week. (Sunday 12AM)

### Draft proposal for the final paper

By the end of the course students should prepare a draft for the final paper. It should be about a specific problem, indicating your position and a first draft of your argument (what you are planning to argue for in your final paper). This draft proposal will be given feedback to within a week. The draft proposal should be submitted by the end of the last week. (Sunday 12AM)

### Final Paper

The final paper is a maximum of 3000 words essay (excluding references) on a chosen topic. It is based on the draft proposal to which feedback is given. The final paper is due by ... according to the departmental calendar.

## Course assessment

15% — Position Paper 1

15% — Position Paper 2

10% — Class performance

60% — Final Paper

Contributions to class discussions are assessed based on relevance, clarity, originality.

Written assignments are assessed based on clarity and structure, strength of argument, creativity, integration of knowledge, deadline.

### Grading

Grade Range Mid range

A 3.68 – 4.00 3.84 max

A- 3.34 – 3.67 mid range A- 3.52

B+ 3.01 – 3.33 mid range B+ 3.16

B 2.68 – 3.00 mid range B 2.84

B- 2.34 – 2.67 mid range B- 2.52

C+ 2.33 (minimum pass)

## Feedback from the students

During the course students are encouraged to voice their concerns about the workload. If significant problems arise we will discuss to maybe reduce some readings, or concentrate on some topics more. At the end of the course there is a questionnaire to fill out, which focuses on several aspects of the course, amongst them: clarity of presentation, accessibility of topics, teacher performance, workload, etc.

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## Resources

Required reading:

Kim, J. (2010): *Philosophy of Mind*, Westview Press.

Recommended books:

Chalmers, D. (1996): *The Conscious Mind*, Oxford University Press, New York.

Robinson, H. (1982): *Matter and Sense*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Journals and other readings:

Chalmers, D. "The hard problem of consciousness"

Descartes, R. (1641 / 1996): 'Meditation VI', in *Meditations on the First Philosophy*, J.

Cottingham (trans.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Honderich, T. (1981): 'Psychophysical law-like connections and their problems', *Inquiry* 24, 277–303.

Crane, T. (2003): 'Mental substances'. In A. O'Hear (ed.) *Minds and Persons*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Internet URLs:

Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy <http://plato.stanford.edu/index.html>

Readings will be added to the course website.

## Additional Information

University policies

<http://www.ceu.edu/studentlife/onlineorientation/student-policies>

Attendance policy

Attendance is required in both the lectures and the seminars. If you are not able to attend classes you should notify me. There is a possibility of missing 20% of the classes. If you miss a class you can meet with me to discuss the topics covered.

## Teaching Strategies

During the course active learning strategies will be used. Each week there is a lecture and a seminar, but on both of these occasions it is the in-class discussion of a problem/reading that stands in the focus. It is not just the problems but the methods of discussion and argumentation we will learn during the course.

## How to study for this Course

Students are expected to do the readings in order to be able to participate meaningfully in the discussions. It is useful if you prepare your comments and questions for each reading before the

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class. Students are encouraged to adopt an agnostic position regarding problems and to take a wider perspective. In order to make use of valuable intuitions it is a great tool to learn how to use thought experiments to express them forcefully.