

# Omar Fakhri

## Philosophy of Mind

### Course Description

We will read both historical and contemporary literature. There are three parts to this course: historical background, the nature of mind, and consciousness and content. Issues in the philosophy of mind can be traced all the way back to ancient philosophers. We will look at two in particular, Plato and Aristotle. In particular, we will look at what they think about the soul and its relation to the body. After, we will go to the early modern period and look at Descartes and Locke. Like Plato, Descartes argues for the view that our soul and body are two distinct substances. This historical background is important for the rest of the course because it will help us see how ancient questions are being discussed in contemporary philosophy

For the rest of the course, we will look at contemporary literature. The first part looks at the nature of mind and the relationship between the mental and the physical. In particular, we will discuss issues about whether mental properties are identical to or reduced to physical properties. We will discuss behaviorism, identity theory, functionalism, and dualism. In the last part of this course, we will discuss consciousness and whether mental content is “all in the head.” Consciousness is a very difficult subject, so we will begin by doing general reading on consciousness and looking at important distinctions that will help us engage the topic more robustly. Then, we will focus on the knowledge argument and the model argument. We will conclude the course by asking whether mental content is internal or external.

### Course Requirements:

- Biweekly Assignments 40% – These are short reaction papers between 400-500 words. You are expected to summarize an important part of the reading and then critically evaluate it.

Pick only **one** of the following requirements (note: for those interested in applying to graduate programs in philosophy, I highly recommend doing the latter option):

- Three Papers 20% each – These are shorter papers, about 5-7 double-spaced pages. Prompts will be handed out a week before the paper is due.

Or

- Long Paper 60% - This is a substantial paper, about 15 double-spaced pages. You will be required to get your paper topic approved by me first. Ideally, you should aim to do this at least a month before the paper is due. This paper will engage with a big bulk of the assigned readings and perhaps some outside sources as well. If you decide to write this paper instead of the three short papers, please let me know as soon as you make this decision. I will provide extensive comments on this paper, and I would be happy to read future drafts of it, even after the class is done.

### Required Text:

There will not be a required text. The reading will be distributed via the course website.

## Course Schedule

### Part 1: Historical Background

#### Week 1: Souls and bodies

Plato: *Phaedo*

Aristotle: *De Anima*, Book II, chaps. 1-3

#### Week 2: Minds and bodies as distinct substances

Descartes: Meditations II and VI

Correspondence between Descartes and Princess Elisabeth

#### Week 3: Matter and thought

Locke: *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book IV, chap. 3; Book IV, chap. 10,

### Part 2: The Nature of the Mind

#### Week 4: Behaviorism

Gilbert Ryle: Descartes' Myth (from *The Concept of the Mind*, pp. 11-24)

Hilary Putnam: Brains and Behavior

#### Week 5: The identity theory

U. T. Place: Is Consciousness a Brain Process?

J. J. C. Smart: Sensations and the Brain Processes

#### Week 6: Functionalism:

David Lewis: Psychological and Theoretical Identifications

Ned Block: Troubles with Functionalism

#### Week 7: Dualism

Brie Gertler: In Defense of Mind-Body Dualism

#### Week 8: Mental causation

Jaegwon Kim: The Many Problems of Mental Causation (from *Mind in a Physical World*, pp. 29-47)

Stephen Yablo: Mental Causation

### Part 3: Consciousness and Content

#### Week 9: Background

Thomas Nagel: What Is it Like to Be a Bat?

David Chalmers: Consciousness and Its Place in Nature

#### Week 10 Knowledge argument

Frank Jackson: Epiphenomenal Qualia

David Lewis: What Experience Teaches

**Week 11: Modal Arguments**

Saul Kripke: *Naming and Necessity*, pp. 144-155

Grover Maxwell: Rigid Designators and Mind-Brain Identity

**Week 12: Internalism and externalism**

Hilary Putnam: 'The Meaning of "Meaning"'

Tyler Burge: Individualism and the Mental

**Week 13: Internalism and externalism (continued)**

Michael McKinsey: Anti-Individualism and Privileged Access

Anthony Brueckner: What an Anti-Individualist Knows A Priori

**Week 14: Extra time**