



# Philosophy Syllabus

Survey of Modern and Contemporary  
Philosophy, PHIL 2317-32591

Special Emphasis: Philosophy of Mind

Spring 2013, Web-Enhanced (3 Credit Hours)

HCC – Northwest College

Spring Branch Campus, Room 319

T, TH 12:30 – 2:00

Instructor: Nathan D. Smith, PhD

Spring Branch Campus, Room 900-D

[nathan.smith2@hccs.edu](mailto:nathan.smith2@hccs.edu)

713-718-7258

Office hours: Tuesday – Thursday, by  
appointment

## Course Description:

Study of major philosophers and philosophical systems from ancient, through medieval, to modern times. (Texas ACGM – Approval Number: 38.0101.55 12)

An historic survey of critical and reflective thinking as applied to the basic problems of existence and the meaning of human life and institutions; begins with the Renaissance, continues with the major philosophers of the 16th, 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, and ends with an examination of the analytic and existential philosophers of the 20th century; a study of the nature of philosophy as applied to the development of the scientific method, the existence of god, and the political structures of society. (HCC Catalog) CORE CURRICULUM COURSE

Fulfills – unless otherwise noted – the HCC CORE Humanities Area credit. May fulfill critical thinking requirement for various academic and professional four-year college majors and Philosophy AA-degree Plan. **Students who are in doubt about their enrollment in this course should immediately see an HCC academic counselor who can review his or her AA-degree plan.**

## Course Goals:

This course will focus on the set of modern philosophical issues commonly grouped under the heading "Philosophy of Mind," though the focus on these issues will be historical, beginning with the 17<sup>th</sup> century and leading up to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Today, philosophers who study the mind find themselves working collaboratively with cognitive scientists, psychologists, linguists, and even computer scientists. The issues studied in this field include, but are not limited to, a

definition of consciousness, an answer to the mind-body problem (whether and how the mind is different than the body), the nature of mental states, content, functions, or processes, personal identity, and free will, as well as more general metaphysical and epistemological issues, such as, the nature of substance, distinctions between substances and their properties, the nature of perception and cognition, subjective vs. objective knowledge, and the extent and certainty of reductive explanation.

### **Student Learning Outcomes:**

**1. Recall and Identify** the major thinkers, schools, core philosophical questions, terms and concepts in the history of modern and contemporary philosophy as it relates to questions of the nature and operations of the mind.

**2. Interpret and Explain** core questions and concepts of the philosophy of mind in terms that illustrate a comprehensive grasp of each.

**3. Apply** core questions and concepts of the philosophy of mind to contemporary issues and personal experience.

**4. Compare and Contrast** related core questions of knowing and concepts in the philosophy of mind, and the correlative thinkers and schools with which they are commonly associated.

**5. Justify** a sound philosophical position on a topic, or topics of contemporary interest in the philosophy of mind that **Integrates** and **Logically Demonstrates** a **Synthesis** in thought.

### **Learning Objectives:**

**1.1 Acquire** a broad familiarity with the names of major thinkers, and the schools of thought as they relate to the study and understanding of the mind.

**1.2 Learn** historically significant questions of knowing, definitions of special terms, the rules of logic, fallacies, correct reasoning, and critical thinking.

**2.1 Cultivate** comprehension of the nature of the mind, scientific explanation, mental content, dualism, materialism, and problems associated with each.

**2.2 Distinguish** various approaches to interpretation, including conceptual analysis and the use of scientific evidence in philosophy.

**3.1 Articulate** the relevance of philosophical questioning and critical thinking to the cognitive sciences and the ordinary ways of knowing, thinking, understanding, and acting.

**3.2 Consider** how philosophy may or may not apply to differing questions in psychology, neuroscience, and first-person experience.

**4.1 Inventory, Summarize, and Assess** correlative questions, concepts, and schools of thought found in the philosophy of mind.

**5.1 Create and cultivate** alternative philosophical positions on presented course content.

**5.2 Develop coherent arguments** for chosen positions, bringing to bear the rules of logic, written expression and disciplined thinking.

**5.3 Critique** chosen positions and adequately **Defend** against possible objections, both theoretical and applied.

### **Notice About Online Learning Management Software:**

This is a *web-enhanced* lecture course that uses *Eagle Online*. The *Eagle Online* logon page is:

<https://hccs1.mrooms3.net/login/index.php>

Your Eagle Online ID is now the same as your HCC User ID which is used for Online Registration (for example: W0034567). If you don't know your HCC User ID, you can [retrieve it here](#). Your default Eagle Online password at the beginning of the term is: "distance". This password is independent of your Online Registration password or Blackboard Vista password. You will be required to change your password when you first log in.

IMPORTANT: Eagle Online works best with the latest version of Mozilla Firefox. Download is free, [here](#).

### **Required Texts:**

Chalmers, David J. ***The Conscious Mind: In Search of a Fundamental Theory***. Oxford University Press, 1996. ISBN: 0-19-511789-1

Dennett, Daniel C. ***Consciousness Explained***. Little, Brown, and Co., 1991. ISBN: 0-316-18066-1

### **Course Calendar:**

Week 1 – Syllabus and “What is the mind?”

Required reading: Chalmers, “The Puzzle of Conscious Experience”; Recommended reading: Ned Block, “On a Confusion About a Function of Consciousness”

Week 2 – Consciousness, science, animals, and machines

Required reading: Galileo, *The Assayer*; Descartes, *Discourse on the Method*, Part 5; Recommended reading: Alan Turing, “Computing Machinery and Intelligence” and John Searle, “Minds, Brains, and Programs”

Week 3 – Dualism

Required reading: Descartes, *Meditations* II and VI

Week 4 – Problems with dualism

Required reading: Descartes – Elisabeth correspondence (pg. 1-7); 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Objections and Replies to the *Meditations* (pg. 42-45 and 54-64)

Week 5 – Classical Materialism

Required reading: Hobbes, *Leviathan*

Week 6 – Spinoza's materialism

Required reading: Spinoza, *Ethics* (pg. 23-26, 28-29, 32-35, and 44-45)

Week 7 – Personal identity

Required readings: Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*; Recommended reading: Daniel Dennett, "Where am I?"

Week 8 – Bundle theory

Required reading: Hume, *Treatise on Human Nature*

Week 9 – Review and mid-term exam

Week 10 – Daniel Dennett

Required reading: *Consciousness Explained*, Chapters 1 and 2

Week 11 – Dennett

Required reading: *Consciousness Explained*, Chapters 4 and 5

Week 12 – Dennett

Required reading: *Consciousness Explained*, Chapters 7 and 9

Week 13 – David Chalmers

Required reading: *The Conscious Mind*, Chapters 1 and 2 (Section 1)

Week 14 – Chalmers

Required reading: *The Conscious Mind*, Chapters 2 (Sections 2-3) and 3

Week 15 – Chalmers

Required reading: *The Conscious Mind*, Chapters 4 (Sections 1, 5, and 6) and 6

TERM PAPER: XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

## **Grading Components and Weights:**

**Reflection Papers (x 4), 25 points each** – There will be four short reflection journal papers (500 words / 2 pages) on a topic of the course. These papers are not meant to be research papers or reports on content. They are philosophical reflection papers where the topics of the course are considered thoughtfully and the implications of the concepts are explored independently. **Preparing for SLOs 2, 3, 4, and 5**

**In-class assignments, 100 points** – There will be frequent assignments that are either composed during class or are part of the reading assignment and will be brought to the class. These will vary in topic and style. I will drop your lowest score and give you a total grade out of 100 points. **Preparing for SLOs 2, 3, and 4**

**Presentation, 100 points** – You will do a presentation on one portion of the reading assignment from either Daniel Dennett or David Chalmers. The presentation must be accompanied by some visual aid. It should be well-organized, thoughtful, accurate, and delivered with confidence. **Preparing for SLOs 2 and 3**

**Mid-term Exam, 200 points** – Identify figures, dates, and works in the early modern theories of mind; define terms and concepts related to the philosophy of mind; explain core concepts and arguments from assigned readings; apply ethical concepts to personal experience and contemporary issues; and compare, contrast, and analyze arguments and ideas from early modern theories of mind. **Assessing SLOs 2, 3, and 4**

**Term Paper, 200 points** – This assignment will be composed of two segments: 1) The process: you must write a thesis paragraph on some topic in modern and contemporary theories of mind; you will then provide a literature review, identifying 4 articles or book chapters that pertain to your thesis topic with a short accompanying description; and finally, you will outline the argument of your paper. (100 points) 2) The final paper: this is due the scheduled day of the final exam and will be graded as a polished, complete research paper. (100 points) **Assessing SLOs 2, 3, 4, and 5**

**Extra Credit:** Up to 50 points will be awarded to students who attend some HCC student activity (an on-campus lecture or film event, club meeting, volunteer activity, etc.). You must provide proof of attendance and a 1 page summary and reflection on your experience. Extra credit points will be awarded based what you turn in to me. *All Extra Credit must be submitted by the last scheduled day of class.*

*!! Philosophy Tutoring is available at <http://hccs.askonline.net/> Please use it if you need it !!*

### **Grading Policy:**

All grades will be calculated according to a percentage of *total points*. The total number of points for this term is 700. The term grade legend follows:

A = 90% to 100% (630 to 700 point)

B = 80% to 89.9% (560 to 629 points)

C = 70% to 79.9% (490 to 559 points)

D = 60% to 69.9% (420 to 489 points)

F = 0% to 59.9% (000 to 419 points)

**Late policy: Late work will be accepted, but unless I have received a valid excuse or the student has arranged for late submission *prior to the deadline*, I will deduct 10% of the grade for the first day and 10% every week it is late after that.**

### **Academic Honesty:**

The pressure to earn high grades and belief that *a good end can justify any means whatsoever* leads many students to try cutting corners by resorting to less than honest methods. Do yourself a favor by avoiding that trap. The HCC *Student Handbook* lists cheating, plagiarism, and collusion as scholastic dishonesty. It defines *plagiarism* as "the appropriation of another's work and the unacknowledged incorporation of that work in one's own written work offered for credit." It defines *collusion* as "the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing work for credit." Work submitted for this course that is determined to be the result of either cheating, plagiarism, or collusion will earn a "0" for that assignment; two instances of cheating, plagiarism, or collusion will result in an automatic "F." Probation or dismissal from HCC and ALL its several colleges may also result. *See Student Handbook.*

### **Make-up Policy:**

Students are responsible for materials covered in-class and online during their absences, and it is the student's responsibility to contact and consult with the instructor for make-up assignments. In addition, any student who is absent on posted exam dates should be prepared to schedule the make-up of missed examinations on the first day of returning to class. Make-up examinations are taken by appointment at the campus Testing Center. This scheduling cannot occur during class time. Any other assignments not turned in on time (due to absences) must also be either turned in, or scheduled for late submission on the first day of returning to class. Finally, there will be no extension of due dates and/or make-ups for Online Requirements. Except for a medical excuse or documented family or personal emergency, there is no exemption from these rules.

### **Attendance and Withdrawal Policy:**

HCC Students are expected to attend class regularly. A daily record of absences will be maintained throughout the semester. NOTE: It is the responsibility of the student to drop, or officially withdraw from this course. Your instructor will withdraw a student if and only if provided a written request from that student. Additionally, system-wide rules affect withdrawals:

- (1) Students who repeat a course for a third, or more times, may face a significant tuition/fee increase at HCC and other Texas public colleges and universities.

**(2)** The Texas Legislature passed a law limiting new students (those starting college in Fall 2007) to no more than six total course withdrawals throughout their academic career in obtaining a baccalaureate degree. There may be future penalties imposed.

**(3)** No student may withdraw from a course following the set "last date to withdraw", which for Spring 2013 on Monday, April 1 at 4:30 pm. After that date and time, a student can only be given a grade earned, or an "I" for incomplete. Incompletes must be made up by the end of the following long semester, after which they will automatically change to a grade of "F". Students receiving an "I" for a course are ineligible for graduation until the "I" has been removed from a student's transcript.

### **Students with Disabilities:**

To visit the ADA Web site, log on to [www.hccs.edu](http://www.hccs.edu), click Future students, scroll down the page and click on the words Disability Information.

For questions, please contact Donna Price at 713.718.5165 or the Disability Counselor at Northwest College, Mahnaz Kolaini at 713.718.5422.