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PHILOSOPHY 4530: Philosophy of Mind

Course Syllabus

Course Description: A study of enduring topics in the philosophy of mind, such as the nature of mind; the mind-body problem; consciousness; the individuation of mental content; artificial intelligence. Historical and contemporary philosophers are discussed.

Course Objectives: To gain a broad overview of the central topics in the philosophy of mind. Upon completion of the course students should be able to (1) comprehend difficult texts in the philosophy of mind, (2) speak confidently and accurately about how mental states are individuated, what constitutes the mental, ontological positions such as dualism, materialism, and idealism, the debate surrounding physicalism, and the debate over whether machines can think, and (3) develop and evaluate arguments about the aforementioned topics, and (4) write effectively about the philosophy of mind.

Texts:

*A Historical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mind*. Second edition. Edited by Peter A Morton (Ontario: Broadview Press, 1985).

Course Requirements:

1. One mid-term examination worth 30% of the course grade.

2. A term paper worth 35% of the course grade. The paper will be approximately 8 to 10 pages (typed and double-spaced), and will be due on the final class meeting of week 14.

3. A final examination worth 30% of the course grade.

4. Class participation is worth 5% of the course grade.

Grading Scale:

90-100 points A

80-89 points B

70-79 points C

60-69 points D

0-59 points E

Course Schedule:

Week 1: Introduction to the philosophy of mind; survey of important topics to be covered. Introduction to central issues in the philosophy of mind. Historical overview of the philosophy of mind.

Weeks 2-3: Artificial intelligence. Topics to be covered: whether machines think, the Turing Test, the Lovelace Test, Searle’s Chinese room thought experiment.

Week 4: The Mind-Body Problem. Topics to be covered: dualism, materialism, and idealism, occasionalism, the doctrine of pre-established harmony.

Week 5: Cartesian Dualism. Topics to be covered: Descartes’s arguments for dualism, objections to Cartesian dualism from Descartes’s contemporaries, recent objections to dualism, freedom of the will.

Week 6: Behaviorism. Topics to be covered: the historical origins of behaviorism, arguments in favor of behaviorism, distinguishing psychological behaviorism from philosophical behaviorism, objections to behaviorism.

Week 7: The Identity Theory. Topics to be discussed: The identity theory, the type-token distinction, folk psychology, intertheoretic reductions, qualia, objections to the identity theory (especially the multiple-realizability problem).

Week 8: Midterm exam and review.

Week 9: Eliminative Materialism. Topics to be covered: eliminative materialism, objections to eliminative materialism

Weeks 10-11: Functionalism and representationalism. Topics to be covered: the historical origins of functionalism, the historical origins of representationalism, the multiple-realizability problem, the inverted spectrum problem, materialist functionalisms, qualia.

Weeks 12-13: Consciousness. Topics to be covered: the problem of consciousness, Nagel’s bat argument, Jackons’s knowledge argument, Chalmer’s zombie argument, perspectivalism.

Week 14: Term papers of approximately 8 to 10 pages are due. The term paper will be a critical research paper involving the use of at least two peer-review sources. Students will be expected to develop and defend a thesis regarding one of the central issues raised in the class. Students will be required to utilize the Philosopher’s Index database. Topics will be handed out in class at least one month prior to the deadline.

Weeks 14-15. Individuation of Mental States. Topics to be covered: content externalism, individualism and anti-individualism, content skepticism, Putnam’s twin-earth thought experiment.

Finals week: A comprehensive final exam will be given.

**Plagiarism will result in failure of the course**. I may also, depending on the circumstances surrounding the instance of plagiarism, recommend further disciplinary action to the dean of students.  Here's a good definition of Plagiarism: "Presenting the work of another person as one's own" (def. taken from Studying Philosophy: A Guide for the Perplexed by John Arthur). Plagiarism can involve any of the following: copying someone else's words directly (without giving credit), paraphrasing someone else's words (without giving credit), or using someone else's ideas (without giving credit). Anytime you use someone else's work (even if it is just a few sentences) you must give them credit for it.

Note: Any student requiring accommodations or services due to a disability must contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) in room 181 of the Student Service Center. SSD can also arrange to provide course materials (including this syllabus) in alternative formats if necessary.

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