Metaphysics and Mind

**Code and section:** PHIL\*2370\*02 (0.5 credits)

**Term:** Winter 2023

**Instructor:** Molly Graham ([mgraha14@uoguelph.ca](mailto:mgraha14@uoguelph.ca))

**Office Hours:** Tuesdays at 4:00 to 5:00 PM, or by appointment**,** in MCKN 367 (in the philosophy department at end of the hall, 2nd last door on your right)

# **Method of Delivery:**

On campus, face-to-face

Class is on **Tuesdays and Thursdays** from **2:30 PM to 3:50 PM in Rozanski Hall, room 106**

# **Course Synopsis:**

By appealing to a blend of science and philosophy, this course provides a tentative yet naturalistic explanation for what a mind is and where minds come from. Metaphysics, understood broadly as the study of "being" or existence, assists the sciences with answering these questions by expanding on and abstracting away from the ideas and concepts provided by empirical evidence for a deeper understanding of how the mind operates. Because the mind is intrinsically a subjective, first-person perspective, any examination of the mind from a scientific, third-person point of view is only able to describe a part of what is occurring in living beings, and therefore, both the sciences and philosophy are required to understand what a mind is. To accomplish this, the first half of the course focuses on Philosophy of Mind and Phenomenology, while the second half introduces key concepts from cognitive science, evolutionary biology, computer programming, and mathematics, as each discipline contributes materials required for generating an understanding of the mind and its characteristics.

# **Course Objectives:**

This improved understanding of the mind will provide students with additional insight into the beliefs and behaviours of both themselves and other individuals. By reflecting on and applying this insight to a variety of domains, including other academic interests, students may notice the emergence of their own dynamic system of learning and improvement. Mileage may vary depending on one’s degree of engagement with course materials, discussions, and assignments.

# **Required Textbook:**

The required textbook *The Phenomenological Mind: An Introduction to Philosophy of Mind and Cognitive Science* by Shaun Gallagher and Dan Zahavi (ISBN: 978–0–415–39122–1) assists in our metaphysical investigation by examining the nature of subjective experience and its relation to evidence from cognitive science.

Readings will also be posted to CourseLink through Ares and each week will consist of a blend of Ares readings and textbook chapters.

# **Assignments & Means of Evaluation:**

* Weekly Self-Reports (10%) – An opportunity for students to reflect on and explore an aspect of their own subjectivity as related to the week’s topic. Due Sunday nights at 11:59 pm
* Summary Paper (25%) – A paper which summarizes the one of the required readings from week 3 and explains its connection to metaphysics. Due Feb. 19 at 11:59 pm
* Critical Response Paper (25%) – An essay which develops an argument of some kind in response to the Summary Paper. Due March 12 at 11:59 pm
* Term Paper (40%) – A paper which produces a brief summary and critical response based on materials from week 8, 9, or 10. Due April 9 at 11:59 pm
* No final exam

Late Penalty: -2% per day; if you think you need extra time, please send me an email at least one day in advance

# **Schedule of Topics**

**For more information, please see “Reading List.pdf”**

Part 1 – Arts

Week 1: Introduction (How do we study the mind?)   
Week 2: Metaphysics (An overview)   
Week 3: History of Philosophy of Mind  
Week 4: Enactivism and Embodiment  
Week 5: Phenomenology  
Week 6: Self-Consciousness

Part 2 – Sciences

Week 7: Cognitive Science

Week 8: Evolutionary Biology  
Week 9: Computers and Programming  
Week 10: Dynamic Systems Theory  
Week 11: Connecting Sciences to Arts  
Week 12: Do Computers Have Minds? (Review and wrap-up)

Standard Statements

Email Communication

As per university regulations, all students are required to check their <uoguelph.ca> e-mail account regularly: e-mail is the official route of communication between the University and its students.

When You Cannot Meet a Course Requirement

When you find yourself unable to meet an in-course requirement because of illness or compassionate reasons, please advise the course instructor (or designated person, such as a teaching assistant) in writing, with your name, id#, and e-mail contact.

Undergraduate Calendar - Academic Consideration and Appeals https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-ac.shtml

Graduate Calendar - Grounds for Academic Consideration https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current/genreg/index.shtml

Drop Date

Courses that are one semester long must be dropped by the end of the last day of classes; two-semester courses must be dropped by the last day of classes in the second semester. The regulations and procedures for course registration are available in their respective Academic Calendars.

Undergraduate Calendar - Dropping Courses https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-drop.shtml

Graduate Calendar - Registration Changes https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current/genreg/genreg-reg-regchg.shtml

Copies of Out-Of-Class Assignments

Keep paper and/or other reliable back-up copies of all out-of-class assignments: you may be asked to resubmit work at any time.

Accessibility

The University promotes the full participation of students who experience disabilities in their academic programs. To that end, the provision of academic accommodation is a shared responsibility between the University and the student.

When accommodations are needed, the student is required to first register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS). Documentation to substantiate the existence of a disability is required, however, interim accommodations may be possible while that process is underway.

Accommodations are available for both permanent and temporary disabilities. It should be noted that common illnesses such as a cold or the flu do not constitute a disability.

Use of the SAS Exam Centre requires students to make a booking at least 14 days in advance, and no later than November 1 (fall), March 1 (winter) or July 1 (summer). Similarly, new or changed accommodations for online quizzes, tests and exams must be approved at least a week ahead of time.

More information: www.uoguelph.ca/sas

Academic Misconduct

The University of Guelph is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity and it is the responsibility of all members of the University community – faculty, staff, and students – to be aware of what constitutes academic misconduct and to do as much as possible to prevent academic offences from occurring. University of Guelph students have the responsibility of abiding by the University's policy on academic misconduct regardless of their location of study; faculty, staff and students have the responsibility of supporting an environment that discourages misconduct. Students need to remain aware that instructors have access to and the right to use electronic and other means of detection.

Please note: Whether or not a student intended to commit academic misconduct is not relevant for a finding of guilt. Hurried or careless submission of assignments does not excuse students from responsibility for verifying the academic integrity of their work before submitting it. Students who are in any doubt as to whether an action on their part could be construed as an academic offence should consult with a faculty member or faculty advisor.

Undergraduate Calendar - Academic Misconduct https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-amisconduct.shtml

Graduate Calendar - Academic Misconduct https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current/genreg/index.shtml

Recording of Materials

Presentations which are made in relation to course work—including lectures—cannot be recorded or copied without the permission of the presenter, whether the instructor, a classmate or guest lecturer. Material recorded with permission is restricted to use for that course unless further permission is granted.

Resources

The Academic Calendars are the source of information about the University of Guelph’s procedures, policies and regulations which apply to undergraduate, graduate and diploma programs.

Disclaimer

Please note that the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic may necessitate a revision of the format of course offerings, changes in classroom protocols, and academic schedules. Any such changes will be announced via Courselink and/or class email.

This includes on-campus scheduling during the semester, mid-terms and final examination schedules. All University-wide decisions will be posted on the COVID-19 website (https://news.uoguelph.ca/2019-novel-coronavirus-information/) and circulated by email.

Illness

Medical notes will not normally be required for singular instances of academic consideration, although students may be required to provide supporting documentation for multiple missed assessments or when involving a large part of a course (e.g., final exam or major assignment).

COVID-19 Safety Protocols

For information on current safety protocols, follow these links:

* • https://news.uoguelph.ca/return-to-campuses/how-u-of-g-is-preparing-for-your-safe-return/
* • https://news.uoguelph.ca/return-to-campuses/spaces/#ClassroomSpaces

Please note, that these guidelines may be updated as required in response to evolving University, Public Health or government directives.