

P360: Philosophy of Mind

Indiana University, Bloomington, Spring 2026

Contact Information

Instructor: Prof Calum McNamara

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Office: [Sycamore Hall, Room 107](#)

Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:00am–12:00pm

Course Meetings

Time: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:25–10:50am

Location: [Woodburn Hall, Room 005](#)

Course Description

Is your mind different from your brain? If it is, then how is it different? Like many philosophical questions, these ones turn out to be harder to answer than they initially appear. In this course, we will examine seminal questions in the philosophy of mind, as a way of introducing students to the subject. The questions we'll address bear on, and are influenced by, historical and contemporary developments in fields like psychology, cognitive science, and neuroscience. But the approach we'll take is distinctly philosophical. Some questions we'll tackle, aside from the ones given above, include: How can minds make things happen in the world? How can they have the content they have? Are minds merely computer programs, and thus can your mind be implemented on a computer? Can we scientifically explain—or even understand—what seems like the central feature of minds: consciousness? The latter part of the course will be devoted to questions connecting the philosophy of mind to recent developments in artificial intelligence (AI).

Materials

Our readings will be drawn largely from the book *Philosophy of Mind* by Jaegwon Kim. You should get yourself a copy. Other readings will be posted to Canvas.

Grading

- Attendance and Participation: 5%
- Paper Proposal: 5% (around 1,000 words)
- Final Paper: 30% (around 4,500 words)

- Midterm Exam: 25%
- Final Exam: 35% (in class, on the last day)

Exams

There will be two exams in this course: one midterm and a final. Note, however, that the final exam will be “midterm style”, and thus will be administered in class, on the last day.

The first midterm will cover the material from Weeks 1 to 8; and the final exam will be cumulative: it will cover material from all parts of the course. That said, I will weight the final more heavily towards material covered later in the course.

Collaborative Final Paper

You will be required to write a final paper for this course *with a co-author* (or, in extreme cases, with two co-authors), which addresses a question from a list of questions that I set. Before writing your paper, you will be required to submit a paper proposal to me, with your co-author(s), outlining your ideas. I will then give you feedback on this proposal, before you go about writing your full-length paper. (I am willing to consider papers dealing with questions not on the list I provide. But if you want to write such a paper, then you should detail for me the question you’re hoping to address in your paper proposal.)

Work on your final paper—and your paper proposal—should be properly collaborative. That is, you should meet with your co-author(s) at least a few times to discuss ideas, and you and co-author(s) should both (all) participate in the writing of the paper itself.

If you would like examples of excellent papers of around the length that you’ll be writing, you should check out articles in the journal *Analysis*. Famously, this journal specializes in short papers (maximum word limit: 4,000 words). I have posted a model such paper to Canvas for you (namely, Andy Clark’s “A Case Where Access Implies Qualia?” (2000)).

Honor Code

Although it should go without saying: don’t cheat on your homeworks. I promote and expect honesty and fairness in all academic matters. All cases of academic misconduct will be referred to the Office of the Dean of Students. Anyone found responsible for misconduct will receive a grade of F for the course, in addition to any sanction from the College. For more information, including examples of academic misconduct and potential sanctions, please see [here](#).

Technology

With two exceptions, laptops, phones, and other electronic devices are not permitted to be used during lecture. The first exception is if you’re going to take notes *by hand* on a device like an iPad or a reMarkable. That’s allowed. The other exception is if you have a disability that necessitates

using a computer, or some other electronic device. Obviously, if that's the case, then I'm happy to accommodate you. But if this is so, please speak to me about it as early as you can.

Communication

If you have a question about course mechanics or housekeeping, please do the following.

- First, check the syllabus.
- Then, if you haven't found your answer, please email your Assistant in Instruction (AI).

Please try not to email either me (Prof McNamara) or your AI with questions about course content—that's what sections and office hours are for. We can provide more thorough answers in section/office hours. Plus, discussing your questions in the presence of other students is often helpful, both for you and for them.

Finally, if you email either anyone involved in the instruction of this course on a weekday, then we will endeavor to answer you within 24 hours. The exception to this rule is if you email on a Friday: then, we will try to answer by the end of the day the following Monday. Please do not repeat email us unless you haven't heard back from us within these time-frames.

Disabilities

The Americans with Disabilities Act is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Students who require academic accommodations can work with AES (Academic Education Services) to arrange for (among other things) assistive technology or academic coaching. Many students don't receive adequate diagnoses, or discover only late in their academic careers that they have access to academic accommodations. Thus, if you even *suspect* that you might need such accommodations, it's worth reaching out early on.

For reasons of privacy and consistency, I ask that you start with AES; in particular, see [here](#) for further details. However, please know that whether or not you are able to arrange formal accommodations, I am committed to working with you to ensure that you are able to participate fully in this course. Just speak to me about your needs, as soon as you can.

Mental Health and "Ghosting"

In the past, I've had students who stop coming to class or section, and stop handing in assignments, partway through the term. This is usually because the student is overwhelmed with work, facing a difficult personal situation, or struggling with a mental health issue. If you find yourself confronted with any of these issues (or a similar one), then I strongly encourage you to talk to the university's counseling service as soon as you can: see [here](#) for contact information. They are professionals and they care very much about your well-being. I also encourage you to communicate with me or your AI about any missing homeworks, etc. We're not mental health professionals, but we care about

your well-being, and can better help you manage your assignments if we know what's going on as it's happening, instead of being informed of any issues shortly before (or after) the end of term.

Schedule

Week 1: Formal Methods Primer

1/13: Reading: Handout on propositions, arguments, and validity

1/15: Reading: Handout on modal concepts, identity, and supervenience

Week 2: Introduction to Philosophy of Mind

1/20: Reading: Kim, Ch. 1

1/22: Reading: Kim, Ch. 1

Week 3: The Mind-Body Problem

1/27: Reading: Kim, Ch. 2

1/29: No class!! Prof McNamara away!!

Week 4: Dualism

2/3: Reading: Kim, Ch. 3

2/5: Reading: Kim, Ch. 3

Week 5: Behaviorism and the Identity Theory

2/10: Reading: Kim, Ch. 4 (Behaviorism)

2/12: Reading: Kim, Ch. 5 (Identity Theory)

Week 6: Identity Theory Continued

2/17: Reading: Kim, Ch. 5 (Identity Theory)

2/19: No class!! Prof McNamara away!!

Week 7: Functionalism

2/24: Reading: Kim, Ch. 6

2/26: Reading: Kim, Ch. 6

Week 8: Functionalism and Mental Causation

3/10: Reading: Kim, Ch. 6; Block, "Troubles with Functionalism"

3/12: Reading: Kim, Ch. 7

Week 9: Review and First Midterm

3/3: Review session; no reading

3/5: Midterm Exam!!

Week 10: Spring Break

3/16: No class; Spring break!!

3/18: No class; Spring break!!

Week 11: Consciousness and Intentionality

3/24: Reading: Kim, Ch. 8

3/26: Reading: Kim, Ch. 9

Week 12: Can AI Systems Have Mental Content?

3/31: Reading: Searle, "Minds, Brains, and Programs"

4/2: Reading: Bender & Koller, "Climbing Towards NLU"

Week 13: Understanding, Reasoning, and Intelligence

4/7: Reading: Buckner, "Understanding Without Grasping" OR Shanahan, *Talking About LLMs*, Chs. 2-3

4/9: Reading: Chalmers, "The Singularity" (excerpts) OR Aaronson, "Why Philosophers Should Care About Computational Complexity" (excerpts)

Week 14: Can AI Be Conscious?

4/14: Reading: Chalmers, "Could a Large Language Model be Conscious?"

4/16: Reading: Dehaene et al., "What is consciousness, and could machines have it?" OR Schwitzgebel & Garza, "A Defense of the Rights of Artificial Intelligences"

Week 15: AI, Agency, and the Future

4/21: Reading: Bostrom, *Superintelligence* (excerpts on value alignment) OR Russell, *Human Compatible* (excerpts)

4/23: No reading (spill over lecture)

Week 16: Review and Final Exam

4/28: Review session (optional)

4/30: Final exam (in class)!!