

PHI 137:

Minds & Brains

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Course Description: What exactly are thoughts, desires, emotions, memories, or sensations? How are these mental phenomena related to events in the physical world? Do people have an immortal soul that lives on after their body dies? Or is all conscious mental experience reducible to neurons firing in the brain? We will attempt to answer each of these questions—we will be answering these questions for ourselves—but we will be guided by reading the work of long-dead as well as currently living philosophers. This course also aims to facilitate personal and academic development. You will learn how to write an email to your professors, how to read the material for your other college courses, how to study *efficiently* for exams, and how to take advantage of the services and support provided by UNCG.

Important Note: Before going on to read any of the materials in this course packet, please be sure to read the syllabus. It contains lots of logistical details that are quite boring when compared to the fun philosophical stuff, but those logistical details are very important.

List of Readings¹

René Descartes, selections from <i>Meditation 2</i> and <i>Meditation 6</i>
Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia, <i>Correspondence with Descartes</i> (w/ reading guide)
Jennifer McWeeny, <i>Princess Elisabeth and the Mind-Body Problem</i> (optional)
Gilbert Ryle, <i>Descartes' Myth</i> (w/ reading guide)
David Armstrong, <i>The Nature of Mind</i> (w/ reading guide)
Hillary Putnam, <i>Brains and Behavior</i> (w/ reading guide)
U.T. Place, <i>Is Consciousness a Brain Process?</i> (w/ reading guide)
Adam Bradley, <i>A Primer on Multiple Realizability and Functionalism</i>
John Searle, <i>Can Computers Think?</i>
Austin Andrews, <i>A Primer on Inverted Qualia</i>
Martine Nida-Rümelin, <i>Pseudonormal Vision</i> (optional)
Thomas Nagel, <i>What Is it Like to Be a Bat?</i>
Frank Jackson, <i>Epiphenomenal Qualia</i> (w/ reading guide)
David Chalmers, <i>The Puzzle of Consciousness</i>
Amy Kind, <i>Chalmers' Zombie Argument</i>

¹ Several of these readings come with a *reading guide*. This is a document that I have written to help make the readings easier to understand. It includes definitions of obscure terms, and it tells you which sections of the reading are most important. It will also tell you that you should skip certain portions of the reading altogether. So the reading guide comes before the actual reading, and you should read the reading guide first!