

Ryerson University  
Department of Philosophy

**PHL611: Philosophy of Mind**

**Winter 2007**

Instructor: Dr. Glenn Parsons

Location: Location and Time: Monday 11-1 KHE121 and Thursday 9-10 KHS251

Time: Fridays, 9:00-12:00 am

Office Hours: Thursday 10:00-11:00 am and 2:00-3:00 pm, or by appointment

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This course is an Upper Liberal Studies Elective.
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## **Course Calendar Description**

This course will examine, through both classical and contemporary texts, selected issues regarding human (and other) minds such as: What is a person and what makes you the same person over time? How are mind and brain related? What is consciousness? Are thoughts prior to the acquisition of language? Can/could computers think? Do non-human animals think? Can the mind be "naturalized" (understood as a product of evolution) or must it remain beyond our understanding?

## **Course Synopsis**

This course is an introduction to the philosophy of mind. We will focus on two questions that intertwine to form the traditional mind/body problem: (1) What sort of thing is the mind, and how does it relate to, or fit with, the physical body? and (2) How do we *know* about minds, as opposed to bodies? After some historical background, including a review of the Cartesian tradition of thinking about these issues, we will examine the major contemporary approaches to the mind in twentieth century philosophy: logical behaviourism, the mind/brain identity theory, and functionalism. In the second half of the course, we will turn to two persistent difficulties with these theories: the existence of qualia, and the 'aboutness' or 'intentionality' of mental states. Some issues we will touch on along the way include: Could a machine think? Do other people have minds? Could a Martian feel pain? Could you speak a completely private language? What are emotions? How do thoughts get to be about objects in the world? Could you be fully sane yet behave exactly like a madman?

## **Texts**

The textbook for this course is Peter Morton's *A Historical Introduction to Philosophy of Mind* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 1997), and it should be available in the Ryerson Bookstore. I may also distribute a few additional readings throughout the term as photocopies, or employ readings available on the web; such additions will be announced in class and on the course Blackboard page. We may also discuss films relevant to some of the course topics. If so, I will arrange for us to watch these in class or I will put copies on reserve in the library.

## Contacting Me/Email

I set aside a specific day of the week to answer student emails, so depending on when you email me you may not get an instantaneous response. Email is fine for quick logistical questions, but if you have a substantial question, I recommend that you use the scheduled office hours to come talk to me in person.

Note that you are required to use a Ryerson email account for this course. You will need this for submitting your essays to Turnitin.com, and if I need to communicate to the class I will email you at your Ryerson address. I reserve the right not to respond to non-Ryerson email addresses (*e.g.* yahoo, hotmail, etc.) and my junk mail filters tends to delete such messages anyway. For information on how to activate your Ryerson email account, go to: <http://www.ccs.ryerson.ca/students/index.cfm?nblockID=22>

## Important Dates

- The Faculty Course Survey will be administered in the period between March 19<sup>th</sup> and April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2007
- The last day to drop a course (no refund of fees) is 9 March, 2007
- Reading Week is February 19<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup>
- I will be out of the country on March 29th, so there will be no class on that date.
- Classes end Friday April 13<sup>th</sup>

For a full listing of significant dates go to <http://www.ryerson.ca/calendar/2006-2007/pg11.html>

## Course Blackboard Page

This course has a Blackboard page, which you should be able to access through <http://my.ryerson.ca>. Various announcements will be posted there periodically, along with certain class material and, at my discretion, grades. Also note that the authoritative version of the class schedule will be the one on the Blackboard page, and if you are missing class you should check it periodically for updates.

## Course Format

This course consists of traditional-style philosophical lectures. In these lectures, I will present the philosophical views developed in the required readings, and then explain, illustrate and provide some criticisms of these views, with an eye toward making them more or less intelligible and relating them to other readings and topics we are considering. I will also encourage the class to ask questions and engage in critical discussion on the topics and theories that we are covering. Please note that any concepts, theories, facts or other material presented in lecture constitutes part of the course content and will be tested on course examinations.

## Evaluation

Grades will be calculated as follows:

	<i>Due Date</i>	<i>Value</i>
Assignment (one sheet of paper, maximum)	Mon, January 22 <sup>nd</sup> (Week 3)	10%
Short Essay #1 (4-6 pages max) (Topic: Cartesian Dualism)	Th. Feb. 15 <sup>th</sup> (Week 6)	25%
Short Essay #2 (4-6 pages max) (Choice of topic: Behaviourism or the Identity Theory)	Th. Mar. 22 <sup>nd</sup> (Week 10)	25%
Final Exam (covers the final two sections of the course: Artificial Intelligence and Qualia)	Exam slot, to be scheduled	40%

- Note that, unless students make alternative arrangements with me by the end of the second week of classes, assignments for this course must be submitted electronically to Turnitin.com (see ‘Course Policies’ below for further information). Instructions on submitting work to Turnitin.com will be provided on the course Blackboard page.
- To submit an assignment, you must give me a hard copy with the first page of your turnitin.com digital receipt stapled to the back. Your essay is only considered submitted when you have done both of these things: (1) submit to turnitin and (2) hand in the hard copy (plus receipt). You can either hand the hard copy to me personally or, if I am not around, drop it in the Philosophy department drop box on the sixth floor of Jorgensen Hall. Do not drop it in the box on the eighth floor, where my office is located. The administrative assistants will stamp your assignment with the time at day’s end to record its submission. Do not slip assignments under my door, put them in my mailbox, email them to me, send them by fax, etc.
- Since the hard copy that you hand in to me must have the first page of your turnitin receipt stapled to the back, before you hand in your essay you must submit an electronic version to turnitin.com, and print off the first page of the receipt. The hard copy that you give me **MUST** be identical to the one that you submitted to turnitin.com. If it isn’t, I will make you resubmit the version that you did give me in hard copy, and if you can’t produce it, I will consider your essay not submitted.
- All assignments are due at 4:30 pm on the date indicated; assignments received after this are considered late. That is, to avoid the late penalty you must have your essay submitted to turnitin by this time and have handed in your hard copy (with the first page of the digital receipt stapled to the back)
- Late assignments should be placed in the drop box on the sixth floor of Jorgensen Hall. The penalty for late submission is one letter grade per day, including Saturdays and Sundays. So, *e.g.*, an A+ paper submitted one day late receives an A, a C- paper submitted two days late receives a D, and so on, up to a

maximum of seven days. Papers that are more than seven days late will receive a grade of zero, unless there are documented medical or compassionate grounds for an extension (see 'Course Policies' below).

- Weekend submissions: Jorgensen Hall is not accessible on weekends. To submit your paper over a weekend, submit it to turnitin.com when you have completed it, and then submit the hard copy (along with the first page of your digital receipt) on the following Monday before 4:30 pm. I will then assess the late penalty depending on the time that you submitted your essay to turnitin.com (*i.e.*, if your essay was due Friday and you submit it to turnitin.com on Sunday at 3:00 pm, your essay is two days late). Note that your essay is not considered submitted until you provide me with a hard copy, so don't forget to do that.
- Grades for work during the term may be posted, listed by student number (minus the first two digits) on the instructor's door or on the course Blackboard page. Students who do not wish to have their grades posted in this manner must contact the instructor in writing during the first two weeks of class.

### **A Note about the Coursework**

The aim of this course is to help you learn to think philosophically, and I will assess this by grading your attempts to address philosophical questions in your assignments, essays and exams. There are certain features that are characteristic of good philosophical thinking and writing, and I will discuss them, show you examples of them, and help you learn to cultivate them in your own writing. Your work will be evaluated on how well it manifests these features (see description of letter grades below). But bear in mind that there is no simple recipe for achieving these qualities in your written work that I, or anyone else, can give you. Good philosophical thinking is not primarily a matter of producing a particular set of statements that constitutes the 'right answer' to a question, nor is it a matter of applying a certain formula or recipe. Addressing a philosophical question well is not, in other words, a 'paint-by-numbers' activity; it is a skill, something more of an art than a science.

Consider an analogy. Some novels are insightful, and this is generally apparent to readers. To the extent that a novel has this quality, it is a good novel. But there is no formula for writing an insightful novel: this can be done in any number of ways depending on just what one is writing about, how one approaches it, and so on. The ability to write insightful novels, though perhaps natural to some extent, is also a skill that one develops through studying good novels, identifying the general features of insightful fiction, and refining one's judgement through practice. This is very similar to what we will be doing in this course with regard to writing and thinking philosophically.

This means that it is particularly important that you take note of the feedback that we give you on your written work over the course of the term. If you do poorly on the assignment on philosopher X, don't simply forget about it and resolve to devote more effort to philosopher Y for the next assignment. For the assignments do not simply test the effort that you have put into philosopher X or Y; rather they test *your philosophical skills*, and the way to improve these skills is to take note of our comments and criticisms before launching your next effort.

### **Description of Letter Grades**

The following is a general description of the meaning of the various letter grades, as we understand them. The term in brackets following each grade is the meaning of that grade according to Ryerson's official policy on grading ([academic council policy #46](#)).

- *A Grade (excellent) work.* Papers at this level are very well organized; they display a clear thesis and a clear aim, and carry that aim off well. They display well-rounded understanding of the issues and concepts deployed and show the ability to analyze and synthesize complex ideas. Arguments are clear and cogent and do not merely repeat arguments or ideas discussed in class notes or texts. Few or no errors are made, and possible responses are anticipated and dealt with in a highly effective way. Papers at this level reflect a deep and thorough grasp of the issues and manifest enough argumentative skill to compel a sceptical reader to accept the thesis offered.
- *B Grade (good) work.* Papers at the B level are well organized: they have a thesis and provide cogent arguments for that thesis. B level papers, however, may contain arguments that are not as original or as sharply presented as those in A papers. Minor errors in the treatment of ideas or concepts may appear, but no serious errors are present. Analysis of ideas and concepts may be sloppy or inaccurate in places. Some obvious objections may remain unaddressed, leaving the whole less than convincing to a sceptical reader. Overall, these papers are good but some work remains to take the paper to the A level.
- *C Grade (satisfactory) work.* Papers at this level present a coherent and relevant argument, but display more problems than B level papers, such as an unclear thesis, difficulties with overall organization, unclear or ambiguous argument or substantial errors in the presentation of ideas. Demonstration of the ability to analyze and synthesize complex ideas may be lacking, and the paper may need to be better informed in light of the course material. Overall, a paper at this level displays a grasp of the issues but needs work in one or more areas to reach the B level.
- *D Grade (marginal) work.* Papers at this level have one or more serious problems. For example, they may be poorly organized, lack a discernible thesis, or present basic concepts inaccurately. Papers at this level tend to drift rather than flow: the reader may have trouble following whole sections of the paper, or in seeing how the different sections together into a coherent whole.
- *F Grade (unsatisfactory) work.* Papers that receive an F are generally uninformed (displaying only rudimentary familiarity with the issues and concepts discussed in the course), incoherent, or both.

## Concerns about Grades

Students with questions or concerns about a grade assigned to their work cannot request a re-grade until and unless they have met with the original marker to discuss the grade in person. This meeting must take place within ten working days of return of the graded assignment to the class. Requests for re-grading made via email, or more than ten days after work has been returned to the class, will *not* be considered. You ought to contact the original marker, whether me or a TA, directly by email to arrange a time for this meeting.

Note that students are expected to have carefully reviewed the assignment and any provided comments before this meeting, and that we will entertain requests for re-grading only if students have specific concerns regarding our original comments on your work. An example of a specific concern is: “You wrote on my essay that I failed to mention philosopher X, but on page six I talked about him for two paragraphs.” “I thought I did better”, “My roommate felt this was an A paper”, or “The TA marked my essay” are not specific concerns about our original comments on your work.

After hearing the student’s specific concerns about the original comments and grade, the original marker will decide either to make no change to the original grade, or to re-grade the work. If the original marker decides to re-grade the work, the new mark becomes the official grade, whether it is higher or lower

than the original mark. In other words, a re-grade is precisely that: a reconsideration of the work. It is not necessary the assignment of a higher grade.

## Course Policies

### Alternate Arrangements for missed Exams and Assignments

- In general, **circumstances interfering with your ability to perform required course work must be brought to the instructor's attention as they arise, and if at all possible, in advance of missed work.** Requests made at the end of term for extensions, rewrites, etc. due to ongoing personal circumstances will not be considered. Alternate arrangements for missed exams and assignments will normally be granted **ONLY** for reasons of illness or injury, religious observance, disability and compassionate grounds (see below).
- Alternate Arrangements/Extensions will **NOT** be granted for the following reasons:
  - Computer failure, loss of work (keep a backup copy of all your work)
  - Social engagements, including family-related events
  - Work schedules
  - Coincident deadlines in other courses
  - Travel other than home-to-school commuting (holidays, cancelled flights, *e.g.*)
- Requests for alternate arrangements will be considered in the following cases:
  1. *Illness/Injury.* Students must provide, within three working days of the missed assignment, essay, or exam, a completed Ryerson Medical Certificate or a letter from a physician (on letterhead) with the student declaration portion of the Ryerson Medical Certificate attached (this form can be obtained at [www.ryerson.ca/rr/medical.pdf](http://www.ryerson.ca/rr/medical.pdf)). The nature of the alternate arrangement for making up the missing grade is left to the discretion of the instructor. For further details, refer to Ryerson Academic Policy 134, Undergraduate Academic Consideration and Appeals, available at [www.ryerson.ca/acadcouncil/current/pol134.pdf](http://www.ryerson.ca/acadcouncil/current/pol134.pdf).
  2. *Religious Observance.* Ryerson policy extends accommodation for religious observances. Requests for such accommodation must be made formally during the first two weeks of class. For the appropriate forms and instructions, see <http://www.ryerson.ca/rr/observemain.htm>. Ryerson's full policy on Accommodation of Student Religious Observance Obligations is available at [www.ryerson.ca/acadcouncil/current/pol150.pdf](http://www.ryerson.ca/acadcouncil/current/pol150.pdf).
  3. *Disability.* Students with a diagnosed physical or learning disability must register with the Ryerson Access Centre at the start of the term. For more information, visit their website at <http://www.ryerson.ca/accesscentre/>
  4. *Compassionate Grounds.* Students unable to complete assignments due to loss of a family member or loved one, or due to personal difficulties that are interfering with their studies, should speak to the instructor as soon as is possible. The instructor reserves the right to require documentation, depending upon the circumstances.

## Academic Misconduct and Turnitin.com

- Students are reminded that they are required to adhere to all relevant University policies, such as the Student Code of Academic Conduct (available online at <http://www.ryerson.ca/acadcouncil/current/pol60.pdf>). This code treats plagiarism (the misrepresentation of someone else's work as your own) as a form of academic misconduct. For detailed information concerning academic misconduct and the relevant penalties, see the Student Code. Note that **the instructor will be distributing information specifying the required citation practices for assignments in this course, and that you are responsible for being aware of and employing this information.** Note also **that it is your responsibility to be aware of what constitutes plagiarism,** and that ignorance of this is not an acceptable excuse.
- Ryerson University subscribes to Turnitin.com, an on-line service that evaluates the originality of written work. Students agree that by taking this course, they are aware that all required papers will be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Detailed instructions on submitting written work to Turnitin will be provided. Note that you are required to use an official Ryerson email account when submitting to Turnitin.com: assignments from other email addresses (yahoo, *e.g.*) will not be accepted. In accordance with Ryerson's academic policy, students who do not wish to submit their work to Turnitin.com must, by the end of the second week of classes, consult with the instructor to make alternate arrangements. Also, students should be aware that "when an instructor has a reason to suspect that an individual piece of work has been plagiarized, the instructor shall be permitted to submit that work to any plagiarism detection service", including Turnitin.com. For more information, see Ryerson's Course Management Policy, Section 4.3.a, available at [www.ryerson.ca/acadcouncil/current/poll45.pdf](http://www.ryerson.ca/acadcouncil/current/poll45.pdf).
- Students should be aware that the instructor reserves the right to conduct an oral examination on the contents of any submitted assignment.
- Note that Ryerson's Examination policy prohibits the bringing of any electronic device, such as a cell phone, PDA, or other such device, into a test or examination. This policy will be enforced in this course.

## Tentative Course Schedule for PHL611, Winter 2006

Note: This schedule is subject to change. For the up-to-date and definitive schedule, see the course web page.

Week	Date	Section	Required Readings*	Events
1	M Jan 8	The Roots of the Mind-Body Problem	---	
	Th Jan 11		Ch.2	
2	M Jan 15		Ch. 3	
	Th Jan 18		Ch. 4	
3	M Jan 22	Dualism	----	<b>Assignment due</b>
	Th Jan 25		Ch. 5 except Locke	Topics for Paper #1
4	M Jan 29		Ch. 5: Locke	
	Th Feb 1		----	
5	M Feb 5	Behaviourism	Ch. 8: Ryle	
	Th Feb 8		Ch 7	
6	M Feb 12		Ch.8: Malcolm	
	Th Feb 15		---	<b>Paper #1 due</b>
<b>Feb 19-23 Reading Week (No Classes)</b>				
7	M Feb 26	The Identity Theory	Ch. 9: Smart	
	Th Mar 1		Ch. 9: Armstrong	Topics for Paper #2
8	M Mar 5			
	Th Mar 8		Ch. 11: Fodor	
9	M Mar 12	Functionalism and Artificial Intelligence	Ch. 10: Turing	
	Th Mar 15		----	
10	M Mar 19		Ch. 10: Searle	
	Th Mar 22		----	<b>Paper #2 due</b>
11	M Mar 26			
	Th Mar 29			
12	M Apr 2	Qualia	Ch 13: Jackson, Nagel	
	Th Apr 5		Ch. 13: Dennett	
13	M Apr 9		Ch. 13: Flanagan	
	Th Apr 12			

- All readings are from Morton, unless indicated.