Topics in Philosophy of Mind

Philosophy 425/625a
Class location: Loria 258
Meeting time: Tuesdays 9:20-11:10am
Instructor: Professor Kati Balog
Office: 406B, Connecticut Hall
Office hours: Mondays 4-5pm or by appointment
email: katalin.balog@yale.edu
home page: http://pantheon.yale.edu/~kb237/

THE BRAIN is wider than the sky,
For, put them side by side,
The one the other will include
With ease, and you beside.

The brain is deeper than the sea,
For, hold them, blue to blue,
The one the other will absorb,
As sponges, buckets do.

The brain is just the weight of God,
For, lift them, pound for pound,
And they will differ, if they do,
As syllable from sound.

Emily Dickinson

Course topics:

In this course we are going to examine consciousness in its many varieties: phenomenal consciousness, access consciousness, awareness and reflective consciousness. We will be especially interested in the nature of phenomenal and access consciousness, the unity of consciousness, the experience of time. Our point of view will be philosophical, but we will discuss some relevant neurophysiological literature as well. Readings will include essays by Block, Chalmers, Dennett, Kriegel, Loar, Noe, Tye and others.

Texts:
a) David Chalmers: Philosophy of Mind, Oxford. (PM)
It is available at Labyrinth Books.
b) Online resources hyperlinked in this syllabus (to access some of the links you have to be on a Yale network computer, connect through Yale dial-up, or use a proxy server).

Some good books on consciousness and philosophy of mind in general to look at:
Philosophy of mind:
Tim Crane: *Elements of Mind*, Oxford

Consciousness:

Philosophy of psychology:
George Botterill and Peter Carruthers: *Philosophy of Psychology*, available electronically.

References:
Philosophers use often use ordinary terms in a technical way. You might also come across issues in the reading that you don’t know about. If you are having any problems understanding anything, ask me. There are some reference works that you might also look at:

 MIT Encyclopedia of Cognitive Science
 Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy
 Contemporary Philosophy of Mind: An Annotated Bibliography
 The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy

Requirements:

a) Response papers:
Weekly response papers (about one page, 450 words or so) which reflect your understanding of one of the readings for the week. Your responses will be due by 8pm on Mondays. Typically, you will give a concise summary of the relevant paper, and if it applies, review counterarguments and problems for the author’s views. These assignments will not be graded but sometimes (though not always) you will get written feedback on them. Together with class participation, they will determine 40% of your grade. You may once or twice fail to turn in this paper 24 hours before class without hurting your grade; but if you fail more than three times you cannot pass the class.

b) Oral presentation:
10 minute oral presentation on one of the readings. You will give a concise summary of some argument(s) presented in one of the readings for the day and kick off the class discussion by raising a question or objection to the text. A written draft of your presentation will be handed in at least 24 hours before the class so as I can make suggestions and comments.

c) Class participation:

Do all required readings, attend seminar, take an active part in discussion. While you might miss class once or twice, failing to attend more than three times will hurt your final grade irrespective of whether you have submitted all written assignments on time.

d) Term paper:

The final paper (about 15 pages for graduate students and philosophy majors fulfilling their senior requirement; about 10 pages for undergrads not fulfilling their senior requirement). Topics will be distributed 3 weeks before the end of semester. You are encouraged to submit a draft ahead of time.

It is expected that all students conform to the code of academic integrity and that any work submitted be one’s own. DO NOT PLAGIARIZE. All cases of suspected plagiarism will be vigorously investigated and all confirmed cases will be reported directly and immediately to University officials. Be safe: always properly cite quotations and acknowledge external sources you have consulted.

However, you are encouraged to submit a draft by April 24th. This will give me enough time to return your paper with comments so you can revise and submit your final paper on time.

It is expected that all students conform to the code of academic integrity and that any work submitted be one’s own. Be safe: always properly cite quotations and acknowledge external sources you have consulted.

Tentative schedule of readings:

1) Jan. 12 Introduction (no reading)

2) Jan. 19 Concepts of consciousness
   * Ned Block, “Consciousness, Accessibility and the Mesh between Psychology and Neuroscience”
   * Katalin Balog, Comments on Block

3) Jan. 26 Canceled

4) Feb. 2 Concepts of consciousness continued
* Uriah Kriegel, *Consciousness: Phenomenal Consciousness, Access Consciousness, and Scientific Practice*
* David Chalmers, "Availability: The Cognitive Basis of Experience?"
* Ned Block, “Two Neural Correlates of Consciousness” *Science, 3,* 73-9

5) Feb. 9 The unity of consciousness, the unconsciuous
* Thomas Nagel, "Brain Bisection and the Unity of Consciousness"

6) Feb. 16 Eliminativism
* Daniel Dennett, “Quining Qualia”, PM 226-247.
* Daniel Dennett and Marcel Kinsbourne, "Time and the Observer: The Where and When of Consciousness in the Brain".

7) Feb. 23 Empirical science and the philosophy of free will I
* Wegner, “The mind's best trick: how we experience conscious will”
* Martine Nida-Rümelin, “Human Agency and Neurophysiological Data” (on Resources page)

8) March 2 Empirical science and the philosophy of free will
* Alfred Mele, “Testing Free Will” (on Resources page)
* Eddie Nahmias, “Autonomous agency and social psychology”

SPRING BREAK

9) March 23 Representationalism
* Gilbert Harman, "The Intrinsic Quality of Experience"
* Ned Block, "Inverted Earth" Feb. 24 Physicalist responses II: Representationalism continued

10) March 30 Higher order and same order theories

11) April 6 Sensorimotor Views on Consciousness
* Susan Hurley and Alva Noe, "Neural plasticity and consciousness." *Biology and Philosophy* 18, 1, pp 131-168


12) April 13 Consciousness and neuroscience

* Jesse Prinz, “A Neurofunctional Theory of Consciousness” (on Resources page)

13) April 20 Embodied theory of consciousness


* Jesse Prinz, “Is consciousness embodied?” (on Resources page)

Make-up class (date TBA): Inverted qualia and comparisons across persons

* Robert Stalnaker, “Comparing qualia across persons”
* Alex Byrne, “Inverted Qualia”, in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*