PHILOSOPHY OF PSYCHOLOGY
PHIL V3654
Summer 2007
Instructor: Sebastian Watzl

Course Description
This course will survey major topics in the philosophy of psychology. It will be centered around questions that arise from psychology considered as an empirical science. Questions to be discussed include: what is the nature of the mental? What is the relation between the mind and the brain? What is the nature of consciousness? Can consciousness be studied empirically? Are there unconscious mental states? If so, which kinds? Are we born with the mind as a blank slate, or are there innate mental principles or is there innate knowledge? Is the mind modular? If so, to what extent? What is mental content and how can it be naturalized? How do we understand other minds? Must we be rational or can our irrationality be demonstrated empirically? What is the nature of psychological explanations? What is the relation of psychology to other sciences, like biology, neuroscience and physics?

Texts
The main textbook for the course will be:


In addition, there will be a course package with additional primary readings available at village copier. There will also be secondary readings that are not required. They will be made available online and are for those students who are interested in reading more on a certain topic, for example because they want to write their essay(s) on it.

Assignments and Grading Policy
The class will meet four times a week and students are supposed to attend and participate in class. There will be a short (1-2 page) assignment every week on the topic discussed that week. For this assignment students may either be asked to explain material discussed in class or come up with a short exposition of a question triggered by the material. In addition there will be one comprehensive mid-term examination and a longer (10 page) paper due at the last day of class on some topic discussed. Grades will be based on the final paper (40 %), the mid-term exam (30 %) and the short assignments (30 %). Class participation will influence borderline grades.

Additional resources
I recommend to look at Jim Pryor’s material on reading and writing philosophy papers:

*Philosophical Terms and Methods*
Reading Philosophy
Guidelines on Writing a Philosophy Paper

Additional resources on the material discussed can be found at:


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

**Tentative Schedule**

Week 1: The nature of the mental

1. Introduction
   - BC Chapter 1 (**primary reading**)

2. The nature of the mental: dualism and identity theory
   - Renè Descartes, Meditations II and VI (**primary reading**)

3. The nature of the mental: from behaviorism to functionalism
   - Skinner, B. F. (1953), Selections from *Science and Human Behavior*, in: Readings in Philosophy of Psychology (Block, N. Ed.), Harvard University Press (**secondary reading**)

4. The nature of the mental: The Chinese Room argument (A Criticism of Functionalism and its rebuttal)
   - Comments on Searle by John Haugeland, Douglas Hofstadter, William Lycan, John McCarthy, and Marvin Minsky, Behavioral and Brain Sciences, 3: 425-6,432-5,439-40 (**primary reading**)

5 The nature of the mental: eliminativism and instrumentalism


Week 2: Innateness: nativism, empiricism and modularity (starting with second session of the second week)

1 Empiricism and nativism

BC Chapter 3, sections, 1-3 (primary reading)

2 The Modularity of Mind

BC Chapter 3, sections 4-6 (primary reading)


3 Massive modularity and evolutionary psychology


Cosmides, L. & Tooby, J. (1987), *From evolution to behavior: Evolutionary psychology as the missing link*. In (J. Dupre, ed.) The Latest on the Best: Essays on Evolution and Optimality. MIT Press. (primary reading)


Week 3: Understanding other minds, Rationality and Moral psychology
1 Understanding other minds

BC Chapter 4 (primary reading)


2 Must we be rational?

BC Chapter 5 (primary reading)


3 Moral psychology


Midterm Examination

Week 4: Mental content: what is it, what is its structure, and how can it be naturalized?
1 Content: Wide or Narrow?
   BC chapter 6 (**primary reading**)


2 Explaining content (1): Teleosemantics and informational semantics
   BC chapter 7, sections 1-3 (**primary reading**)

3 Explaining content (2): CRS and concepts
   BC chapter 7, sections 4-6 (**primary reading**)

4 Thinking in Images and Words
   BC chapter 8 (**primary reading**)

Week 5: Consciousness and the unconscious

1 Consciousness and the unconscious (Freudian and cognitive)
   BC, Chapter 9, section 1 (**primary reading**)

   Freud (????) (**primary reading**)

2 Two different notions of consciousness

   Block, N. (1995), *On a confusion about the function of consciousness*, Behavioral and Brain Sciences, 18:22747 (**primary reading**)

3 Problems with consciousness: explanatory gap and mysterianism

   BC, Chapter 9, section 2 (**primary reading**)


4 Theories of consciousness: First and Second order representationalism

   BC Chapter 9, sections 3 + 4 (**primary reading**)

Week 6: The nature of psychological explanations
1 Psychological Explanations: Psychological Laws and the relation of psychology to basic sciences


2 Psychological Explanations: Functional explanation


3 Psychological Explanations: Levels of explanation


4 General Wrap up and leftovers (PAPER DUE)