Consciousness

Philosophy 388T, Spring 2010

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Philosophy & Cognitive Science

From the Course Catalog:

The nature of consciousness remains a fundamental mystery of the universe. Our internal, felt experience — what chocolate tastes like to oneself, what it is like to see the color red, or, more broadly, what it is like to have a first person, waking perspective at all — resists explanation in any terms other than the conscious experience itself in spite of centuries of intense effort by philosophers and, more recently, by scientists. As a result, some prominent researchers propose that the existence of consciousness requires a revision of basic physics, while others (seemingly desperately) deny that consciousness exists at all. Those positions remain extreme, but the challenge that consciousness poses is dramatic. It is at the same time the most intimately known fact of our humanity and science’s most elusive puzzle.

In this tutorial we will read the contemporary literature on consciousness. We will concentrate both on making precise the philosophical problem(s) of consciousness and on understanding the role of the relevant neuroscientific and cognitive research. Tutorial partners will have an opportunity to spend the end of the semester working on a special topic of their choosing including, for instance, consciousness and anesthesia, consciousness and artificial intelligence, disorders of consciousness, or the scientific reduction of mind to brain.

This is a writing intensive course.

REQUIRED TEXTS

The required readings for the semester will be distributed at the first seminar meeting.

GRADING

1. Tutorial Essays

   In this tutorial you will present FIVE essays, approximately 7-9 pages each.

   In these essays you will be expected to engage substantial themes that arise in the readings. You may elect to focus carefully on a single strand of argumentation in one of the readings, or you may attempt a more synthetic treatment of the several pieces that you read that week.
PLEASE EMAIL OR DELIVER YOUR PAPER TO YOUR TUTORIAL PARTNER (AND TO THE INSTRUCTOR) BY 5PM THE DAY BEFORE YOUR MEETING. No late essays will be accepted. Essays should be typewritten, double spaced in a 12 point font with 1 inch margins. No title page.

You will present your tutorial essay during tutorial meetings.

_The tutorial essays and your presentations constitute 50% of your final grade._

2. _Tutorial Participation and Critical Notes_

Critical discussion during meetings is the heart of the tutorial. On weeks where you do not present, you will be expected to engage your tutorial partner's work thoughtfully, energetically, tenaciously, and respectfully. You will already have read your partner's paper once, and you will prepare beforehand notes that you will draw on for the conversation. Note that a critical discussion does not demand that one criticize. You are encouraged to signal your elaborations and sympathetic amendments to your partner's work.

Tutorial notes will likely be 2-3 pages, to be turned in at the end of the tutorial meeting. They may be typed or legibly handwritten, and need not be polished (e.g., an annotated outline is acceptable).

_Participation in the tutorial and your tutorial discussion notes constitute 50% of your final grade._

3. _Independent Topics Research and Essay_

The last two weeks of the tutorial are given over to themes within consciousness research that are of interest to you. For one of the independent project weeks, you will be responsible for assigning required reading and for compiling a brief bibliography of additional material. For that week you will also lead the tutorial meeting and present your own work on the topic you have selected.

You will be expected to prepare your usual conversation notes on the week when your partner is presenting her independent research material.

TUTORIAL RESOURCES

_Meetings_ - Supervisions will convene in my office, NAB 306. You may bring drinks with you, but food is not welcome.

_Office Hours_ - The instructor is available for office meetings each week in NAB 306. Students may visit individually or in groups. Please check my webpage for my office hours this semester.

_Philosophy of Consciousness Bibliography_ - Professor David Chalmers has prepared a comprehensive bibliography of work on consciousness. This will be your main resource for supplementary material.
### Schedule of Topics and Readings

Below is the list of required reading for each week of the course. You are strongly encouraged to read additional material and incorporate it into your essays; suggestions can be found in the weekly bibliography and in the topical entries of Chalmers' bibliography.

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<td>Jackson, F. (1986) &quot;Epiphenomenal qualia&quot;</td>
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<td>Churchland, P.M. (1985) &quot;Reduction, qualia, and the direct introspection of brain states&quot;</td>
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<td>Chalmers, D. (1995) &quot;Facing up to the problem of consciousness&quot;</td>
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<td>Dennett, D. (2001) &quot;Consciousness: How much is that in real money?&quot;</td>
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<td>Bennet, K. (2006) &quot;Why I am not a dualist&quot;</td>
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<td>Churchland, P.S. (1996) &quot;The hornswoggle problem&quot;</td>
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<td>Chalmers, D. (2004) &quot;How can we construct a science of consciousness?&quot;</td>
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<td>Dennett, D. (1988) &quot;Quining qualia&quot;</td>
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| Week Five 3/15-3/19 | Topic: HOT Theories of Consciousness  
Byrne, A. (1997) "Some like it HOT: Consciousness and higher order thoughts"
|---------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| Week Six 4/5-4/9   | Topic: Empirical Matters  
Readings: Bisiach, E. (1992) "Understanding consciousness: clues from unilateral neglect and related disorders"
Searle, J. (2000) "Consciousness"
|---------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| Week Seven 4/12-4/16 | Topic: Empirical Matters  
Kanwisher, N. (2001) "Neural events and perceptual awareness"
Block, N. (2007) "Consciousness, accessibility, and the mesh between psychology and neuroscience"
|---------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| Week Eight 4/19-4/23 | Topic: Phenomenology and Enactment  
Readings: Merleau-Ponty, M. (1945) from *Phenomenology of Perception*
Sartre, J-P. (1956) from *Being and Nothingness*
O’Reagan, J.K., and Nöe, A. (2001) "A sensorimotor account of vision and visual consciousness"
Kelly, S. (2002) "Merleau-Ponty on the body"
Schneebaum, R. (2009) "Reading Other Minds."
|---------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| Week Nine 4/26-4/30 | Topic: Special Topics in Consciousness  
Readings: To be announced
|---------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| Week Ten 5/3-5/7   | Topic: Special Topics in Consciousness  
Readings: To be announced
|---------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
http://www.williams.edu/philosophy/fourth_layer/faculty_pages/jcruz/courses/consciousness.html

Supplementary tutorial material

Week One


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**Week Two**


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**Week Three**


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**Week Four**


Week Five


Weeks Six & Seven

Paul Azzopardi & Alan Cowey, Is blindsight like normal, near-threshold vision?

Axel Cleeremans & John-Dylan Haynes, Correlating consciousness: A view from empirical science

Christof Koch, Towards the neuronal substrate of visual consciousness

Geraint Rees, Gabriel Kreiman, & Christof Koch, Neural correlates of consciousness in humans


Maxine Sheets-Johnstone, Consciousness: A natural history


Week Eight


Possible Special Topics

— Consciousness and Free Will
— Budhist Perspectives on Consciousness
— Disorders of Consciousness
— Consciousness and AI
— Consciousness in Non-Human Animals (and its relation to animal welfare)
— Anesthesia and Pain