

WILLIAMS COLLEGE  
RELIGION 288 / PHILOSOPHY 288  
Fall 2019

THE EMBODIED MIND: MEDITATIVE PRACTICES,  
THE MIND SCIENCES AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF MIND

Prof. Georges Dreyfus  
Department of Religion  
Office: Hollander Hall 357  
gdreyfus@williams.edu

Prof. Joe Cruz  
Department of Philosophy &  
Program in Cognitive Science  
Office: Stetson/Sawyer 503  
jcruz@williams.edu

### Course Requirements

You are expected to come to class prepared to raise questions about the material, answer questions and discuss the issues involved. A missed class will require a summary and response paper to the readings for that week. 4-6 pages.

Essay 1 on the empirical study of consciousness, 5-7 pgs...30% of final grade  
Essay 2 on meditation and meditation journal, 5-7 pgs.....30% of final grade  
Final Research Essay, 12-15 pgs.....40% of final grade

You are required to practice meditation regularly.

No laptops or food in the classroom. The honor code applies fully to this class.

### Required books

Wallace, *The Attention Revolution*; Gallagher & Zahavi, *The Phenomenological Mind*.  
Plus reading packet available at the Class of '37 House, 51 Park Street (Behind Paresky)

### Outline of Class Topics and Readings

#### Class 1 Methods

Clark, Mindware, Introduction & Chap 1 packet  
Chalmers, "Facing up to the Problem of Consciousness" section 1-6 packet  
Gallagher & Zahavi, *The Phenomenological Mind*, chap. 1 & 2 section 1  
("Fantasies in the Science of Consciousness").  
Meditation: Introduction to concentration

#### Class 2 Consciousness and attention

Wu, *Attention*, 11-41, 176-207, 270-274 packet  
Thompson, *Waking, Dreaming, Being* packet  
Watzl, "The Nature of Attention" packet  
Lutz, et al., "Attention regulation and monitoring in meditation" packet  
Google: *change blindness. hemi-neglect, stroop effect, binocular rivalry*.  
Meditation: Concentration.

**Class 3** The practice and study of meditation

Wallace, *The Attention Revolution*, 1-116

Re-read Lutz & al., “Attention regulation and monitoring in meditation” packet

Tricycle, “Meditation Nation” packet

Love, “Meditation is a Powerful Tool” packet.

Faure, “Buddhist Meditation and Neuroscience” packet.

Suggested: Lomas & al., “A Qualitative Analysis of Experiential Challenges

Associated with Meditation” packet

Meditation: Concentration

**Class 4** Phenomenological method, consciousness and its structure.

Gallagher and Zahavi, *The Phenomenological Mind*, chap. 2, 5, 6.

Husserl, *The Essential Husserl*, 87-91, packet

Meditation: Mindfulness of breathing.

**Class 5** Naturalizing phenomenology or quining qualia?

Dennett, “Quining Qualia,” 43-57, packet

Frankish, “Illusionism as a theory of consciousness” packet

Carman, “Dennett on Seeming,” packet

Meditation: mindfulness of feelings.

**Essay 1:** It is standard to claim that consciousness eludes explanation by traditional cognitive approaches to the mind. In this essay explain in detail why this is thought and evaluate whether the arguments for the elusiveness of consciousness are correct.

**Class 6** But what is consciousness?

Fasching, “Consciousness, self-consciousness and meditation,” packet

Gallagher and Zahavi, *The Phenomenological Mind*, chap. 3 & 4;

Kiverstein, “Consciousness, the Minimal Self and Brain,” packet

Meditation: mindfulness.

**Class 7** Embodiment as a gateway to consciousness

Gallagher and Zahavi, *The Phenomenological Mind*, chap. 7.

Prinz, “Is Consciousness Embodied?” packet

Ciaunica, “Basic Forms of pre-reflective consciousness” packet

Meditation: body scan and mindfulness of sensations.

**Class 8** How do we know what we think?

Schwitzgabel, “Descartes Inverted” in Hurlburt and Schwitzgabel, *Describing Inner Experience* packet

Ratnayake, “The problem of mindfulness” packet

Dreyfus, “But what is Mindfulness? A phenomenological Approach” packet

Suggested: Lutz & al., “Investigating the Phenomenological Matrix of Mindfulness Related Practice,” 632-644 packet

Meditation: mindfulness.

**Class 9** Subjectivity and agency

Wegner, “Apparent Mental Causation,” packet

Gallagher and Zahavi, *The Phenomenological Mind*, chap.8

Hanna & Maiese, *Embodied Minds in Action*, 195-202, packet.

Meditation: mindfulness.

**Essay 2:** Answer this question including substantial references to your personal experience of meditation without limiting yourself to this dimension: “What is the use, if any, of meditation in the study of consciousness?” Include separately some excerpts from your meditation journal.

**Class 10** Subjectivity: self or no-self?

Gallagher and Zahavi, *The Phenomenological Mind*, chap. 10;

Dreyfus, “What Happens when the Self Goes?” packet

Clark, “Soft Selves and Ecological Control,” packet

Suggested: Case, “Stages in the Development of Young Children’s First Sense of Self” packet.

Wallace, *The Attention Revolution*, 80-94, 131-134, 144;

Meditation: Open presence style of concentration.

**Class 11** Buddhism and the science of positive affects

Panksepp, “Affective Consciousness: Core emotional feelings in animals and humans,” 1-5 packet

Maiese, “Body and Emotion” in the *Routledge Handbook of Embodied Cognition*, 231-239 packet

Dreyfus and Thompson, “The Abhidharma Tradition and its View of the Mind” packet

Chambers & al, “Mindful emotion regulation,” packet.

Meditation: mindfulness of the body-mind complex: identification vs. disidentification.

**Class 12** From subjectivity to intersubjectivity

Gallagher and Zahavi, *The Phenomenological Mind*, chap.9;

Zahavi, “Simulation, projection and empathy” in *Consciousness and Cognition*, packet;

De Vignemont & Jacob, “What Is It To Feel Another’s Pain?” in *Philosophy of Science*, packet;

Wallace, *The Attention Revolution*, 23-27, 39-42, 57-58, 69-73.

Meditation: compassion and loving-kindness.

**Final Research Essay Due**

**Final paper suggested topics**

*Write a research paper using original sources and course material on one of the listed topics. You are welcome to write on your own topic, you must consult with the instructors on its theme and scope.*

1) What is the nature of the self? How can the cognitive sciences help advance the problem? Does the opposition of bundle vs. ego theories of the self make the issue more tractable? Where do various Buddhist views fall within this opposition? What is the difference, if any, between the self and the subject? Does Buddhism and/or phenomenology help to conceptualize this difference?

2) What is at stake in the opposition between neurophenomenology and heterophenomenology? Does neurophenomenology have a value or is heterophenomenology sufficient?

3) What is the role of the body in the formulation of our sense of self? How does proprioception provide a basis for our sense of self? What more is needed beside proprioception to develop a sense of self? Is

our sense of self purely conceptual and linguistic? What are the different dimensions that a theory of the self needs to account for?

4) Does the embodied cognitive approach gain plausibility or evidence in light of phenomenology or meditation? Can one combine the phenomenology of consciousness, which seems to be presupposed by meditation, with the robotics of EC? How so?

5) What is the nature of agency? What is its connection with consciousness and the sense of the self? Are Buddhist thinkers right to argue that agency is connected to the self? And if they are, how can a person liberated from the illusion of the self (the Arhat) act? Are actions possible without a sense of self?

6) What are the prospects of mapping the invariant properties of phenomenality on to structural features of the nervous system or the environment? What kinds of theoretical tools are going to be required?

7) How can we understand the knowledge of other's mind in the light of phenomenology/ cognitive sciences/ meditation. What do the cognitive sciences suggest? Do they provide a basis for conceptualizing our relations to others? Do they clarify the notion of intersubjectivity?

8) Can a principled scientific distinction be made between individual cognition and processes in the "external" environment? In what way does phenomenology or meditation shed light on this question?

9) Can the notion of experience sustain critical analysis or is it just a grand illusion, as argued by Dennett and his followers? How can consciousness in general and perceptual presence in particular be explained? How important is the notion of experience to understand meditation?

10) Can dualism be defended in the light of recent advances in the mind sciences? How have contemporary thinkers argued for dualism? What are persuasive in their arguments? Are there promising avenues for modern dualism?

11) What is the usefulness of meditation for the study of attention? How is attention conceptualized and what are the problems that this raises? Can the study of meditation help (re)conceptualize attention? Does it throw light on the interplay between top-down and bottom-up processes?

12) Is there a role for meditation (not as an object of study, but as a source of scientific insight) in *classical* cognitive science?

13) What is the nature and limitations of introspection? Can meditation remedy to these limitations and make introspection a more reliable tool in the study of the mind? What is the role of introspection in meditation? How does it relate to mindfulness and what does this relation suggest as far the study of consciousness?

14) Can the distinction between conceptual and non-conceptual representations provide a basis for a viable cognitivist account of experience? How can this distinction be drawn? How feasible are some of the standard accounts (Peacocked, Dretske, Bermudez, etc.) of non-conceptual experience?

15) What are the prospects and challenges of the scientific study of meditation? What kinds of meditation have been studied? How have they been studied? How reliable are such studies? What can we hope to learn through such studies? (Be sure that you provide a critical analysis and not just a description of the studies.)

16) What are the prospects for the psycho-therapeutic use of meditation? What are the results obtained so far in dealing with depression, various forms addictions, etc? Which kinds of pathology are likely to be treatable through meditation? Why? What are the difficulties involved in the study of the therapeutic effects of meditation? (Be sure that you provide a critical analysis and not just a description of the studies.)

17) What are the nature, scope and limitations of introspection? How do these limitations affect the project of neuro-phenomenology? Can the study of meditation remedy the limitations of introspection, or is the study of meditation of a different order?

18) Is free will an empirical question? What is the debate about? What are the different views on this question? What can cognitive science contribute to the debate?

19) What are the issues at stake between proponents of external cognition such as Clark and their internalist opponents? How does this debate connect with the Embodied Cognition paradigm? Does the latter imply the externalist view that cognition is extended and that cognitive systems and processes are not inside the brain?

20) The philosophical baby: From where does the newborn start cognitively and how does the cognitive system develop? Does the phenomenology that we have developed in this course (invariant features) help understanding the formation of consciousness in the newborn? What are some of the debates concerning the emergence of these invariant features?

21) Pathologies of the self: What are the various pathologies of the self and how can we understand them by using some of the concepts developed in this course? Be sure to examine a broad range of pathologies and not just to focus on Alzheimer or Depersonalization.

22) The debate about emotions: Barrett offers a fully constructivist view of emotions sharply at odds with Panksepp's view that emotions are at least on the basic level innate evaluation mechanisms rooted in mammalian brains. Assess the debate between both sides by evaluating not just their views but also the arguments and methods they use to reach their conclusions. Which side do you support, and most important, why?