

Theories of Consciousness (PHIL4220)

Carleton University, Winter 2018

Day/Time: Tuesdays, 11:35pm – 2:25pm **Location:** Paterson Hall 3A36

Prof. Myrto Mylopoulos

Office: 3A47 Paterson Hall **Office Telephone:** 613-520-2600 x3943

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 10-11am (and by appointment)

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Course Description

In recent decades, consciousness has become an active subject of inquiry in the philosophy of mind, cognitive psychology, and cognitive neuroscience. In this seminar, we will explore some of the most promising theoretical frameworks that have emerged as a result of this interdisciplinary focus, and evaluate the extent to which advances have been made in our understanding of this all-important mental phenomenon. After considering what many take to be among the main puzzles that a theory of consciousness ought to solve, we will examine and evaluate the following candidates: Representationalism, Higher-Order Theory, Global Workspace Theory, and AIR theory. We will also engage with current and relatively recent debates in consciousness studies, with the aim of getting a sense of where this field of research is at today, and what future directions are taking shape.

Course Objectives

Our aim in this course will be to support and develop the following:

- An understanding of some of the classic puzzles that have motivated much of the research on consciousness.
- An understanding of the main theoretical frameworks that are currently active in consciousness research.
- An ability to critically evaluate these frameworks, in both written and oral forms of communication.
- An understanding of specific current debates in consciousness studies.
- An ability to critically evaluate the relevant positions in these debates, in both written and oral forms of communication.
- An understanding of the interdisciplinary nature of consciousness studies, including a grasp of contributions from psychology and neuroscience.

Course Materials

- All required readings and additional resources will be made available on cuLearn.

Course Requirements

Course Component	Percentage of Final Grade
Participation	15%
Critical Responses (x5)	25%
In-Class Presentation	20%
Term Paper (35%) + Abstract (5%)	40%

Readings

Readings will be assigned for every class session except the first and last. All readings are required, except for those marked as ‘optional’ on the course syllabus. While optional, you are strongly encouraged to do these readings, as they’ll help both to fill in the background for and expand on some of the material we’ll be covering in class. Please ensure you complete all required readings for a class session before that session. Come prepared to discuss them.

Critical Reading Responses

You will write **up to seven** critical reading responses (400 – 500 words each) over the course of the semester (starting in week 3). Only your **best five** responses will be counted. These will each be worth **5%** of your final grade for a total of **25%**.

The responses are intended to give you an opportunity to critically reflect, in writing, on the main claims, arguments, or theories you encounter in the readings/class discussions. As such, **you should not merely summarize** the material you are addressing, though of course some summary will be necessary, but rather **evaluate** and **expand** on it. I will go over a grading rubric in class and some general guidelines for how you might approach these responses.

Responses will be submitted via cuLearn and are due **before** the start of the class for which the relevant reading is assigned. Late responses will not be accepted.

You are encouraged to use ideas you develop in these responses as the basis for your term paper.

Term Paper

You will write one term paper (**8-10 pages**) due on **April 11th** and worth **35%** of your final grade.

You will write an abstract (**150 – 250 words**) for this paper, to be submitted no later than **March 20th**. This will be worth **5%** of your final grade, and will be graded on the basis of completion only.

We will discuss further instructions/guidelines in class closer to the due date.

In-Class Presentations

Starting in **week 3**, each of you will have the opportunity to do a “conference-style” class presentation on some aspect of the assigned readings. This is worth **20%** of your final grade.

You will sign up for presentation slots on cuLearn on a first-come, first-served basis. Presentations will be 15 minutes, followed by a 5-minute question and answer period. We will have one to two presentations per class, typically during the second half of each class.

You will meet with me no later than one week before your presentation date with an outline of what you plan to discuss. If are presenting on the same day as someone else, please consult with them in order to ensure that you do not significantly overlap in your material.

Guidelines for the presentation itself (we’ll discuss further in class):

- Prepare a handout to distribute to the class **or** a slide presentation (but not both).
- Approx. 10 minutes of the presentation should be devoted to exposition: What is the main thesis for which the author is arguing? What is the relevant background/context within which this argument is being made? What is the structure of the main argument? What are its premises and the justification the author provides for each one?
- Approx. 5 minutes of the presentation should be devoted to critical discussion: Are there weaknesses you’ve identified in the author’s overall argument? Are there counterexamples to main claims that they have failed to consider? Are there ways the author might strengthen the case they make for their view?

Participation

You can earn up to 15% of your final grade in participation points.

There are four main ways to earn such points:

1. As this seminar will be largely discussion-based, you may earn participation points by contributing to our weekly class discussion. You can do so by raising questions pertaining to the course material, answering questions asked by myself or one of your classmates, and generally being active and engaged throughout the duration of each class.
2. Each week, I will set up an online discussion forum, where you are encouraged to post your critical responses to the assigned readings (if you wrote one for that week), to respond constructively to those posted by others, to raise questions pertaining to the readings, to answer questions posed by your classmates, etc.
3. After each class presentation, there will be a short Q&A period. You may earn participation points by asking questions during these Q&A sessions.
4. You may earn participation points by coming to see me during office hours to discuss course material.

If for any reason you expect to miss class, I would appreciate your sending me a quick note letting me know.

Electronic Devices in the Classroom

Please turn off (or silence) any cell phones and put them away before the start of class. You may use laptops for note-taking. (But, please(!), not for texting, chatting, checking e-mail/the news/social media, doing work for other classes, watching cute videos of babies or non-human animals, and all the other obviously distracting things. There will be a 10-15 minute break in the middle of each class during which you are free to engage in such understandably rewarding activities.)

Office Hours and Availability

My regular office hours are as stated up top. I'm happy to meet you at other days/times as well—just make arrangements with me over email or in person.

I will do my best to respond to your emails within 24 hours, but I may be a bit slower on weekends and holidays, because I am human and sometimes (only sometimes!) I unglue myself from my laptop. If you think your message will require a lengthy reply from me, please arrange to come and see me in person instead.

Course Topics/Readings Schedule (may be revised)

Week 1 (Jan.9): Introduction

Week 2 (Jan.16): Puzzles of Consciousness

- Readings TBA

Week 3 (Jan.23): Puzzles of Consciousness

- Readings TBA

Week 4 (Jan.30): Puzzles of Consciousness

- Readings TBA

Week 5 (Feb.6): Theories of Consciousness: Representationalism

- Readings TBA

Week 6 (Feb.13): Theories of Consciousness: Higher-Order Theory

- Readings TBA

Week 7 (Feb.20): No Class (Fall Break)

Week 8 (Feb.27): Theories of Consciousness: Global Workspace Theory

- Readings TBA

Week 9 (March 6): Theories of Consciousness: Information Integration Theory

- Readings TBA

Week 10 (March 13): Theories of Consciousness: AIR Theory

- Readings TBA

Week 11 (March 20): Special debates: Does phenomenology overflow cognitive access? *ABSTRACTS MUST BE SUBMITTED BY THIS DATE*****

- Readings TBA

Week 12 (March 27): Special debates: Does unconscious perception exist?

- Readings TBA

Week 13 (April 3): Special debates: What is the relationship between consciousness and agency?

- Readings TBA

Week 14 (April 10): TBA

Department of Philosophy and Carleton University Policies (Fall/Winter 2017-18)

Assignments:

Unless specifically told otherwise by their instructors, students:

- must not use a plastic or cardboard cover or paper clips
- must staple the paper (there is a stapler on the essay box)
- must include the following:
 - student name
 - student number
 - course number and section
 - instructor's name
- No assignments will be accepted after the last day for handing in term work – see dates in next column.
- Assignments handed in through the essay box (just inside the glass doors, Paterson Hall, Floor 3A) must be dropped into the box by **4:15** on a regular business day in order to be date-stamped with that day's date. Assignments handed in after 4:15 or on a non-business day will be stamped as having been handed in on the next business day.
- Students are required to keep copies of their assignments. If your paper is lost at any point, you will be considered not to have submitted it if you cannot produce a copy immediately on request.

Deferrals for Final Exams:

If you miss a final examination (formally scheduled or take-home) because of circumstances beyond your control, you may apply for a deferral. You must apply within 3 working days after the scheduled date of your formally scheduled exam or within 3 working days after the due date of a take-home exam. Visit the Registrar's Office for more information:

<http://calendar.carleton.ca/undergrad/regulations/academicregulationsoftheuniversity/acadregsuniv2/#2.5>

Plagiarism:

It is the responsibility of each student to understand the meaning of 'plagiarism' as defined in the Undergraduate or Graduate Calendars, and to avoid both committing plagiarism and aiding or abetting plagiarism by other students. <https://carleton.ca/registrar/academic-integrity/>

Academic Accommodation:

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request the processes are as follows:

Pregnancy obligation: write to your professor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details visit the Equity Services website: <http://www2.carleton.ca/equity/>

Religious obligation: write to your professor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details visit the Equity Services website: <http://www2.carleton.ca/equity/>

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: The **Paul Menton Centre** for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send your **Letter of Accommodation** at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (*if applicable*). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with your professor to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC

website for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally-scheduled exam (*if applicable*) at <http://www2.carleton.ca/pmc/new-and-current-students/dates-and-deadlines/>

You can visit the Equity Services website to view the policies and to obtain more detailed information on academic accommodation at <http://www2.carleton.ca/equity/>

Important Dates:

Sept. 6	Classes start.
Sept. 19	Last day for registration and course changes for Fall term and Fall/Winter (two-term) courses.
Sept. 30	Last day for entire fee adjustment when withdrawing from Fall term or two-term courses.
Oct. 9	Statutory holiday. University closed.
Oct. 23-27	Fall Break – no classes.
Nov. 24	Last day for summative or final examinations in Fall term courses before the official examination period.
Dec. 8	Last day of Fall term classes. Classes follow a Monday schedule. Last day for academic withdrawal from Fall term courses. Last day for handing in term work and the last day that can be specified by a course instructor as a due date for term work for a Fall term course.
Dec. 10-22	Final examinations for Fall term courses and mid-term examinations in two-term courses. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week.
Dec. 22	All take-home examinations are due.
Jan. 8	Classes begin.
Jan. 19	Last day for registration and course changes in the Winter term.
Jan. 31	Last day for a full fee adjustment when withdrawing from Winter term courses or from the Winter portion of two-term courses.
Feb. 19	Statutory holiday. University closed.
Feb. 19-23	Winter Break – no classes.
Mar. 27	Last day for summative or final examinations in Winter term or two-term courses before the official examination period.
Mar. 30	Statutory holiday. University closed.
Apr. 11	Last day of two-term and Winter term classes. Classes follow a Friday schedule. Last day for academic withdrawal from Fall/Winter and Winter courses. Last day for handing in term work and the last day that can be specified by a course instructor as a due date for two-term and for Winter term courses.
Apr. 14-26	Final examinations for Winter term and two-term courses. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week.
Apr. 26	All take home examinations are due on this day.

Addresses:

Department of Philosophy:	3A35 Paterson Hall www.carleton.ca/philosophy 520-2110
Registrar's Office:	300 Tory www.carleton.ca/registrar 520-3500
Academic Advising Centre:	302 Tory www.carleton.ca/academicadvising 520-7850
Writing Services:	4 th Floor, Library http://www.carleton.ca/csas/writing-services/ 520-3822
MacOdrum Library	http://www.library.carleton.ca/ 520-2735