MIND AND ACTION (PHIL3502)

Carleton University, Fall 2019

Day/Time: Tuesdays, 2:35pm – 5:25pm **Location:** Canal Building 2202

Prof. Myrto Mylopoulos

Office: 3A47 Paterson Hall **Office Telephone:** 613-520-2600 x3943
Office Hours: Mondays, 2:30pm-3:30pm; Tuesdays, 1-2pm (and by appointment)
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General Calendar Description

PHIL 3502 [0.5 credit]
Mind and Action
Philosophical thought concerning the relation between mentality and agency. Topics may include: the relation between belief, desire, and behaviour; rationality and normativity; representing and doing; subjectivity and intersubjectivity; physical and psychological laws; mental causation. Authors may include: Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Ryle, Sellars, Anscombe, Davidson, Taylor, McDowell.
Prerequisite(s): PHIL 2501 or PHIL 2502, or permission of the Department.

Specific Course Description

In this course, we will examine fundamental issues related to human action and the psychological mechanisms that give rise to it. We will start by looking at classic attempts to satisfy the need for a basic account of what it is that distinguishes things that merely happen to us from things that we *do*, that is, from expressions of our own agency. It will emerge that such attempts force us to confront a host of puzzling questions, among them the following: What psychological events, states, and processes are responsible for the initiation, guidance, and control of intentional action? What challenges arise in attempting to reconcile an understanding of agency and intentional action with a scientific understanding of the universe? What about an understanding of ourselves as free, morally responsible agents? How exactly do we come to know what we are doing, if it is not simply by observing our behaviour? What is the best way to understand the experience of acting and the role of consciousness in causing our behaviour, especially in light of recent empirical findings that seem to cast doubt on the existence of such a role? How do agents come to develop into highly skilled experts within certain action domains, and what is it that distinguishes skilled experts from novices? Through detailed engagement with key texts that have addressed these and other questions, this course aims to set a theoretical foundation for understanding human action and its fascinating complexity.

Course Objectives

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

- An understanding of key issues, questions, and debates in contemporary action theory.
- An ability to clearly and effectively articulate a critical viewpoint on issues within contemporary action theory.
- An understanding of how contemporary action theory relates to broader philosophical questions in philosophy of mind, philosophy of cognitive science, metaphysics, epistemology, and moral psychology.

Course Materials

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

Course Requirements

Course Component	Percentage of Final Grade
Participation	15%
Mini Writing Assignments x 3 (worth 5%, 10%, and 15% respectively)	30%
Midterm Exam	20%
Term Paper (incl. Abstract)	35%

Readings

Readings will be assigned for every class session except the first one. All readings are required, except for those marked as 'optional' on cuLearn. While optional, you are strongly encouraged to do these readings, as they'll help to both 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.

Mini Writing Assignments

The main purpose of the mini writing assignments is to help you develop the skills necessary for writing your final term paper.

Mini Writing Assignment #1 (5%): Short exposition of a key argument (approx. 250 words)
DUE: FRIDAY, OCT. 4 by 5pm
Pick one specific argument from the readings and explain the argument in writing.

Mini Writing Assignment #2 (10%): Short exposition of two related arguments (approx. 500 words)
DUE: FRIDAY, NOV. 1 by 5pm
Pick two specific arguments from the readings that are importantly related to one another (e.g., one of the arguments is a challenge to the other argument, or one of the arguments builds or expands on the other argument). In your paper: (i) explain each argument, and (ii) explain how they are related.

Mini Writing Assignment #3 (15%): Short critical response to two related arguments (approx. 750 words)
DUE: FRIDAY, NOV. 22 by 5pm
Pick *two specific arguments* from the readings that are related to one another. In writing: (i) explain each argument, (ii) explain how they are related, and (iii) raise an objection to one of the arguments, (iv) come up with a response.

Mini writing assignments should be submitted via cuLearn **by 5pm on the due date**. Late assignments will not be accepted except under extenuating circumstances (e.g., family emergency, extreme illness) with appropriate documentation.

We will go over the grading rubric for each of these writing assignments in class.

Midterm Exam
The midterm exam will be in the form of written answer questions. It will be held in class on **October 29th** and worth **20%** of your final grade.

Term Paper
You will write one term paper **(8-10 pages)** due on **Friday, December 6th** and worth **35%** of your final grade. It will be submitted via cuLearn.

You will submit (via cuLearn) a short (approx. 150 words) abstract of your paper (thesis statement plus a brief description of how you will go about arguing for it), worth **5%** of your paper grade. You have until **Tuesday, November 19** to submit your abstract. The purpose of this abstract is to articulate the basic outline of your paper, and receive some feedback prior to writing it. It will be graded for completion only (pass/fail).

We will discuss further instructions/guidelines for the final paper and abstract in class.

Participation
Active participation is a key component of this course and is worth **15%** of your final grade. This means, among other things, attending each class on time having done the readings carefully, being prepared to discuss them, asking questions during class, responding to questions asked by myself or a classmate, engaging in class activities, posting questions, responses, or comments to our class discussion forum on cuLearn, and visiting office hours to discuss course material.

Electronic Devices in the Classroom
Please turn off (or silence) your cell phones and put them away before the start of class. The use of laptops for the **sole purpose** of note-taking is permitted.

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 not always be able to do so. If you think your message will require a lengthy reply from me, please arrange to come and see me in person instead.

Course Readings/Topics Schedule (May be revised)

Week 1 (Sept. 10): Introduction (No readings)

Week 2 (Sept. 17): The Causal Theory of Action (CTA)

- Davidson, "Actions, Reasons, and Causes"

Week 3 (Sept.24): Intention

- Davis, "A Causal Theory of Intending"
- Bratman, "Two Faces of Intention"

Week 4 (Oct. 1): Challenges to the CTA: The Problem of Causal Deviance

- Shepherd, "The Contours of Control"
- Wu, "Experts and Deviants: The Story of Agentive Control"

Week 5 (Oct. 8): Challenges to the CTA: The Problem of the "Out of Touch" or "Disappearing" Agent

- Velleman, "What Happens When Someone Acts?"
- Hornsby, "Agency and Actions"

Week 6 (Oct. 15): Alternatives to the CTA

- McCann, "Volition and Basic Action"
- O'Connor, "Agent Causation"

Week 7 (Oct. 22): NO CLASS (Fall Break)

Week 8 (Oct. 29): In-Class Midterm Exam

Week 9 (Nov. 5): Free Will and Free Action

- Strawson, "The Impossibility of Moral Responsibility"
- Frankfurt, "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person"

Week 10 (Nov. 12): Consciousness and Action Control

- Pacherie, "Can Conscious Agency Be Saved?"
- Mele, "Free Will: Action Theory Meets Neuroscience"

Week 11 (Nov. 19): Agentive Phenomenology *LAST DAY TO SUBMIT ABSTRACT*

- Bayne, "The Sense of Agency"
- Grunbaum, "The Feeling of Agency Hypothesis: A Critique"

Week 12 (Nov. 26): Skilled Action

- Papineau, "Choking and the Yips"
- Fridland, "Skill and Motor Control: Intelligence All the Way Down"

Week 13 (Dec. 3): TBA

Department of Philosophy and Carleton University Policies (Fall/Winter 2019-2020)

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 on the first page: student name and number; course name and number; instructor's name.
- No assignments will be accepted after the last day for handing in term work – see dates below.
- 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.

Evaluation:

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

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:

If you have a documented disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation or contact your PMC coordinator to send your instructor your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term. You must also contact the PMC 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 instructor as soon as possible to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. carleton.ca/pmc

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/

Survivors of Sexual Violence: as a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and is survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit: carleton.ca/sexual-violence-support

Accommodation for Student Activities: Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Please contact your instructor 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. https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf

For more information on academic accommodation, please contact the departmental administrator or visit: students.carleton.ca/course-outline

Important Dates:

Sept. 4	Classes start.
Sept. 17	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. Withdrawals after this date will result in a permanent notation of WDN on the official transcript.
Oct. 14	Statutory holiday. University closed.
Oct. 21-25	Fall Break – no classes.
Nov. 22	Last day for summative tests or examinations, or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade, before the official examination period.

Dec. 6	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. 9-21	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. 21	All take-home examinations are due.
Jan. 6	Classes begin.
Jan. 17	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. Withdrawals after this date will result in a permanent notation of WDN on the official transcript.
Feb. 17	Statutory holiday. University closed.
Feb. 17-21	Winter Break – no classes.
Mar. 24	Last day for summative tests or examinations, or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade, in winter term or fall/winter courses before the official examination period.
Apr. 7	Last day of two-term and winter term classes. 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. 10	Statutory holiday. University closed.
Apr. 13-25	Final examinations for winter term and two-term courses. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week.
Apr. 25	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:	4th Floor, Library http://www.carleton.ca/csas/writing-services/ 520-3822
MacOdrum Library	http://www.library.carleton.ca/ 520-2735