

## Theories of Consciousness (PHIL4220)

Carleton University, Fall 2020

**Day/Time:** Thursdays, 2:35pm – 5:25pm **Format:** Synchronous (Zoom)

Prof. Myrto Mylopoulos

**Virtual Office Hours:** Wednesdays, 2:30pm-3:30pm; Thursdays, 1:30pm-2:30pm; and by appointment

**E-mail:** [Myrto.Mylopoulos@carleton.ca](mailto:Myrto.Mylopoulos@carleton.ca)

### 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 Neuronal Workspace Theory, and Information Integration 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 current and recent 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.

### Virtual Classroom

We will hold class in a virtual setting at our allotted course day/time each week. We will use Zoom (<https://zoom.us/>) as our platform. A link to our classroom will be made available each week with a secure password. All of our class sessions will be recorded and made available on cuLearn.

Zoom Guidelines:

- Here is a link to a short web tutorial on how to use Zoom and its features as a student in the classroom setting: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wbnyQwsVbiY>
- For best performance, I recommend using the Zoom desktop client available here: <https://zoom.us/download>. You may also use Zoom through your browser.

- Please turn your camera on for the duration of the class, unless something prevents you from doing so (connectivity issues, etc.), in which case just let me know. Make sure it's at eye-level.
- Set your microphone to 'mute' unless you're talking, so as to reduce background noise.
- Make sure you sit in a place that is as well-lit and quiet as possible.
- Be mindful of what's going on behind you. You may want to have a solid wall behind you or turn on the virtual background

## **Course Requirements**

<b>Course Component</b>	<b>Percentage of Final Grade</b>
Reading Assignments (Perusall)	20%
Class Participation (Zoom)	15%
Critical Reading Responses (x6)	30%
Term Paper (Incl. abstract worth 5%)	35%

### **Reading Assignments**

Readings will be assigned for every class session except the first. All readings are required, except for those marked as 'background' or '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.

To work through the readings, we will be using Perusall, a collaborative e-reading platform that enables you to tackle the readings together as a group in between our class sessions. The reading assignments you complete on Perusall will be worth **20%** of your final grade. They will be due the day before class (Sundays) by 5pm.

We will discuss further details and a grading rubric on the first day of class. Reading assignments on Perusall will only be counted from week 3 onwards, to allow you to try out the platform and gain some familiarity with it first.

To register for a free Perusall account, go here: <https://app.perusall.com/> For info on how to use it, please see: <https://support.perusall.com/hc/en-us/categories/360002173133-Students>

### **Class Participation**

Participation is a key component of this course and worth **15%** of your final grade.

There are four main ways to earn points for participation:

1. By attending class and 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. By contributing to the weekly class discussion about the course readings on Perusall (especially going above and beyond what is strictly required for the reading assignment).
3. By asking questions during the Q&A session after a class presentation.
4. By attending 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.

## **Critical Reading Responses**

You may write **up to seven** critical reading responses (max. 500 words each) over the course of the semester (starting in week 2). Only your **best six** responses will be counted. These will each be worth **5%** of your final grade for a total of **30%**.

The responses are intended to give you an opportunity to critically reflect, in structured writing, on the main claims, arguments, or theories you encounter in the readings. (You may wish to use discussion activity on Perusall as a springboard for these responses.) 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 **by 5pm on the day before** the start of the class for which the relevant reading is assigned (**Wednesdays**). **Late submissions 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 of **10-12 pages** due on **December 11<sup>th</sup>** and worth **35%** of your final grade.

You will write an abstract (**150 – 250 words**) for this paper, to be submitted no later than **November 19<sup>th</sup>**. This will be worth **5%** of your paper grade, and will be graded on the basis of completion only.

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

## **Virtual Office Hours and Availability**

My regular office hours are as stated at the beginning of this document and will be held online over Zoom. (A link will be made available each week on cuLearn.) I'm happy to meet you online on other days/times as well—just make arrangements with me over email.

I will do my best to respond to your emails within 24 hours, but I may be a bit slower on weekends and holidays. If you think your message will require a lengthy reply from me, please arrange an online appointment instead.

## Course Topics/Readings Schedule

**\*\*\*May be revised. Check cuLearn for most updated version.\*\*\***

**\*\*\*Specific Readings TBA\*\*\***

**Week 1 (Sept. 10): Introduction**

**Week 2 (Sept. 17): Puzzles of Consciousness**

**Week 3 (Sept. 24): Dualism and Panpsychism**

**Week 4 (Oct. 1): Representationalist Theories of Consciousness**

**Week 5 (Oct. 8): Higher-Order Theories of Consciousness**

**Week 6 (Oct. 15): Global Neuronal Workspace Theory**

**Week 7 (Oct. 22): Recurrent Processing Theory**

**Week 8 (Oct. 29): No Class (Fall Break)**

**Week 9 (Nov. 5): Information Integration Theory**

**Week 10 (Nov. 12): Does Unconscious Perception Really Exist?**

**Week 11 (Nov. 19): Does Consciousness Have a Function?**

**Week 12 (Nov. 26): Could an AI Ever Be Conscious?**

**Week 13 (Dec. 3): Do Non-Human Animals Feel Conscious Pain?**

**Week 14 (Dec. 10): TBA**

## Department of Philosophy and Carleton University Policies (Fall/Winter 2020-21)

### **Assignments:**

Please follow your professor's instructions on how assignments will be handled electronically. There will be NO hard copies placed in the essay box this coming year.

### **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 Term Work:**

If students are unable to complete term work because of illness or other circumstances beyond their control, they should contact their course instructor no later than *three working days* of the due date. Normally, any deferred term work will be completed by the last day of the term. Term work cannot be deferred by the Registrar.

### **Deferrals for Final Exams:**

Students are expected to be available for the duration of a course including the examination period. Occasionally, students encounter circumstances beyond their control where they may not be able to write a final examination or submit a take-home examination. Examples of this would be a serious illness or the death of a family member. If you miss a final examination and/or fail to submit a take-home examination by the due date, you may apply for a deferral no later than *three working days* after the original due date (as per the University Regulations in [Section 4.3 of the Undergraduate Calendar](#)). Visit the [Registrar's Office](#) for further information.

### **Plagiarism:**

Plagiarism in any form will not be tolerated. 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. ([Section 10.1 of the Undergraduate Calendar Academic Regulations](#))

### **Academic Accommodation:**

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term:

- *Pregnancy or 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 [EDC](#) website.
- *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](mailto: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 test or exam requiring accommodation. After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with your professor to ensure accommodation arrangements are made.

- *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 where survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per [Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy](#).
- *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.

### **Important Dates:**

Sept. 9	Classes start.
Sept. 23	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. 12	Statutory holiday. University closed.
Oct. 26-30	Fall Break – no classes.
Nov. 27	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. 11	Last day of fall term classes. <b><i>Classes follow a Monday schedule.</i></b> 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. 12-23	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. 23	All take-home examinations are due.
Jan. 6	Classes begin.
Jan. 20	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. 15	Statutory holiday. University closed.
Feb. 15-19	Winter Break – no classes.
Mar. 26	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. 2	Statutory holiday. University closed.

- Apr. 9 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 No classes or examinations take place.
- Apr. 11-23 Final examinations for winter term and two-term courses. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week.
- Apr. 23 All take-home examinations are due.

**Addresses:**

Department of Philosophy:  
[www.carleton.ca/philosophy](http://www.carleton.ca/philosophy)  
520-2110

Registrar's Office:  
[www.carleton.ca/registrar](http://www.carleton.ca/registrar)  
520-3500

Academic Advising Centre:  
[www.carleton.ca/academicadvising](http://www.carleton.ca/academicadvising)  
520-7850

Writing Services:  
<http://www.carleton.ca/csas/writing-services/>  
520-3822

MacOdrum Library  
<http://www.library.carleton.ca/>  
520-2735