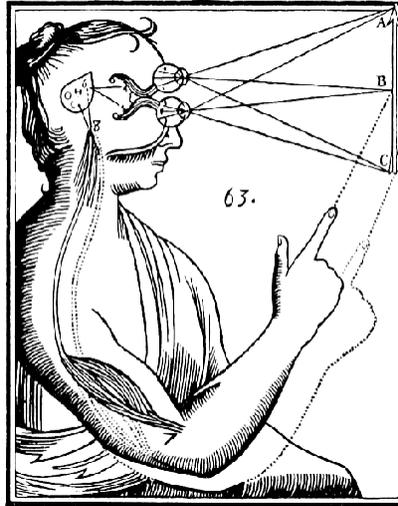


WESTERN UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
Undergraduate Course Outline 2023-24

PHIL 2050G: Scientific Search for the Mind



Winter Term 2023-2024

Instructor: N/A

DESCRIPTION

In his treatise *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1641), the French philosopher René Descartes put forward the idea that “minds”, in so far as they are *thinking* things, differ from physical bodies, which do not think. Descartes’ claim that the mind and body are separate substances—a view referred to as “substance dualism”—prompted philosophers and scientists to wonder: *How can minds be studied scientifically if they are not a part of the physical world?*

In this course, we will consider a variety of different answers to this question by critically evaluating areas of philosophy and science that have emerged historically to understand the nature of the mind and its place in the physical world. We will begin by considering Cartesian dualism and the mechanical philosophy and Lockean empiricism. The sciences that will be then be the focus of our analysis include: phrenology & localization theory (e.g., Francis Gall, Pierre Flourens, Paul Broca, Carl Wernicke), early physiology (e.g., Hermann von Helmholtz) and experimental psychology (William Wundt), William James’ (cognitive) psychology, learning theory and behaviorism (Ivan Pavlov, John Watson and B.F. Skinner), neurophysiological understandings of mental illness & Freudian psychoanalysis, and cognitive science & artificial intelligence (e.g., Alan Turing).

This course is designed for and should be of interest to students majoring in the humanities and/or the sciences.

TEXTS

This course requires that you read primary readings written by philosophers and scientists. Primary readings for the course are available as pdfs on Owl under the “Resources” folder (“Online Readings”).

It also will be helpful for you to do background reading from a secondary source book that situates the philosophical and scientific approaches to understanding and investigating the mind-brain that we will consider in a broader historical context. Thus, I am also assigning readings from the following textbook (wherever you see an F&R on the schedule, that indicates a reading from this book). This is a great book and presents the ideas of the philosophers and scientists we will consider in an engaging way:

Fancher, Raymond E. & Rutherford, Alexandra (2017). *Pioneers of Psychology*, 5th Edition. W.W. Norton & Company. **Designated on schedule by F&R – this is really a text for background reading.

OBJECTIVES

Students who successfully complete this course will have developed a detailed understanding of a variety of scientific approaches to studying and understanding the mind, the ability to critically evaluate these approaches, and the capacity to formulate and defend their own positions with respect to such approaches.

METHODS OF EVALUATION

Attendance & Participation:	25%
Mid-Term Exam:	30%
Participation as Speaker in an In-Class debate:	25%
Participation as Judge in In-Class debate:	20%

AUDIT

Students wishing to audit the course should consult with the instructor prior to or during the first week of classes.

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY POLICIES

The Department of Philosophy policies that govern the conduct, standards, and expectations for student participation in Philosophy courses are available in the Undergraduate section of the Department of Philosophy website <http://uwo.ca/philosophy/undergraduate/policies.html>.

It is your responsibility to understand the policies set out by the Senate and the Department of Philosophy, and thus ignorance of these policies cannot be used as grounds of appeal.

ACCOMMODATION

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Office of the Dean of the student’s Faculty of registration, together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested. The UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness and further information regarding this

policy can be found at

http://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf.

EVALUATION OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

At least three days prior to the deadline for withdrawal from a course without academic penalty, students will receive an assessment of work accounting for at least 15% of their final grade. For 3000- or 4000-level courses in which such a graded assessment is impracticable, the instructor(s) must obtain an exemption from this policy from the Dean and this exemption must be noted on the corresponding course syllabus. In rare instances and at the Dean's discretion, other courses could receive a similar exemption, which also must be noted in the course syllabus.

COURSE ASSIGNMENT

The last day of scheduled classes in any course will be the last day on which course assignments will be accepted for credit in a course. Instructors will be required to return assignments to students as promptly as possible with reasonable explanations of the instructor's assessment of the assignment.

ACADEMIC OFFENCES

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

PLAGIARISM CHECKING

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com <http://www.turnitin.com>.

SUPPORT SERVICES

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Student Development Centre <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help. Immediate help in the event of a crisis can be had by phoning 519.661.3030 (during class hours) or 519.433.2023 after class hours and on weekends.