

WESTERN UNIVERSITY
Department of Philosophy
Undergraduate Course Outline 2026-27

PHILOSOP 3450G
Philosophy of Neuroscience

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Information including instructor contact details and course location can be found on the course Owl BrightSpace: <https://westernu.brightspace.com/>

PREREQUISITE CHECKING

No prerequisites

[Student Responsibility for Course Selection](#)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

During the past three decades neuroscience has made major strides in advancing our understanding of the brain and nervous system, consciousness, cognition and behavior. Such advances have prompted interest in neuroscience among philosophers of mind and philosophers of science, leading to the creation of two new philosophical research areas: “neurophilosophy” and “philosophy of neuroscience”. Neurophilosophers are interested in questions such as: Are mental states nothing over and above brain states? How does the brain enable subjective and emotional experiences, higher-order consciousness and cognition? What kinds of claims about traditional philosophical issues such as the mind-brain relationship, free will and human morality can be made on the basis of neuroscientific data? What are the implications of neuroscience for the law? What are the ethical implications of enhancing or altering human brain function? Philosophers of neuroscience, in contrast, are concerned with questions like: What is the nature of explanation in neuroscience? What kinds of assumptions inform neuroscientific research? What makes for a good or reliable neuroscientific experiment?

In this course we will address many of these questions. The course should be of interest to students majoring in philosophy, cognitive science or neuroscience.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students who successfully complete this course will have developed a detailed understanding of a variety of philosophical and 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.

TEXTS

A combination of philosophical and scientific (i.e., methodological, research and review papers/chapters) articles from philosophical and scientific journals, books, textbooks, and anthologies available through Western’s library will be made available to students as PDF files on OWL. There is no cost associated with these texts.

METHOD OF EVALUATION

1. Short take-home essay assignment (10%) [Due Jan 28th]
2. Essay exam 1 (in-class) (30%) [Feb 11]
3. Essay exam 2 (in-class) (30%) [Mar 18]
4. Final paper (30%) [Due April 8]

Exams: Students are required to write two 90-min examinations during the term. These exams will test knowledge of concepts and arguments contained in the readings that have been the focus of class discussions. They will be administered in person and will be closed book; readings, notes, and electronic devices will not be permitted. Students requiring examination accommodations should arrange with Accommodated exams to schedule writing of their exam. The exams are *Designated Assessments*, which means that all requests for academic consideration due to an “Undocumented Absence” will be denied. Any make-up examinations will be administered in person on a date to be specified by the instructor.

Short Essay Assignment and Final Paper: The instructor will provide explicit directions, topics, and the grading rubric for the essay assignment and final paper and will dedicate a portion of class time to talk about the details of each.

Essay assignments submitted after the due date will lose 5% per day up to a maximum of one week, after which they will not be accepted.

All final papers must be submitted on the last day of the course by 11:59 p.m., which is the final day that they can be accepted. Any exception to this submission date may be granted only as a result of a petition to the Academic Counsellor of a student’s Home Faculty. Instructors have no authority to waive this requirement.

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.

AUDIT

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

ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Electronic devices of any kind (including calculators, cell phones and smart watches) are not permitted on texts and exams.

STATEMENT ON THE USE OF GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

In this course, the use of AI (automatic translation tools, grammar checkers, ChatGPT...) is prohibited. If unauthorized AI use is suspected, the instructor will ask for **research notes, rough drafts, essay outlines**, and other materials used in **preparing assignments**. If concerns are raised about the authenticity of any assignment, students will be asked to produce these materials and the professor and/or teaching assistants will ask to meet with the student to talk about the contents of the essay to determine whether the student can flexibly talk about its contents in a way that reflects that they are the author of the paper. Students are expected to **retain** all materials until after the final grades have been entered.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION AND ACCESSIBLE EDUCATION

Academic Accommodation is “a means of adjusting the academic activities associated with a course or program of student in order to permit students with disabilities to participate in those activities at the University and to fulfill the essential requirements of a course or program.” <https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academicpolicies/appeals/Academic%20Accommodationdisabilities.pdf>. Students with disabilities are encouraged to register with Accessible Education at the earliest opportunity. “Accessible Education plays a central role in Western's efforts to ensure that its academic programs are accessible for all students” https://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/index.html

SPECIAL EXAMINATIONS

A Special Examination is any examination other than the regular examination, and it may be offered only with the permission of the Dean of the Faculty in which the student is registered, in consultation with the instructor and Department Chair. Permission to write a Special Examination may be given on the basis of compassionate or medical grounds with appropriate supporting documents. To provide an opportunity for students to recover from the circumstances resulting in a Special Examination, the University has implemented Special Examinations dates. These dates as well as other important information about examinations and academic standing can be found [here](#).

ACADEMIC CONSIDERATION

Students may request academic consideration in cases of extenuating circumstances – that is, personal circumstances beyond the student’s control that have a substantial but temporary impact on the student’s ability to meet essential academic requirements.

1. Requests for academic consideration are made to the Academic Advising office of Faculty in which the student is registered.
2. Requests for academic consideration include the following components:
 - a. Self-attestation signed by the student;
 - b. Indication of the course(s) and assessment(s) relevant to the request;
 - c. Supporting documentation as relevant

Requests without supporting documentation are limited to one per term per course.

Documentation for medical illness, when required, includes the completion of a [Western Student Medical Certificate \(SMC\)](#) or, where that is not possible, equivalent documentation, by a health care practitioner. Requests linked to examinations scheduled by the Office of the Registrar during official examination periods as well as practice laboratory and performance tests typically scheduled in the last week of term always require formal supporting documentation.

Policy on Academic Consideration – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs

RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION

Western's Policy on Accommodation for Religious Holidays can be found here:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_religious.pdf.

In the case of mid-term tests, notification is to be "given in writing to the instructor as early as possible, but not later than **one week** prior to the writing of the test".

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.

SCHOLASTIC 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:

https://www.uwo.ca/biology/pdfs/undergraduate/rights-and-responsibilities/scholastic_discipline_.pdf

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

ACADEMIC ADVISING

Your Home Faculty's Academic Advising Office will support or refer whenever you have an issue that is affecting your studies, including information on adding/dropping courses, academic considerations for absences, appeals, exam conflicts, and many other academic related matters. Do not hesitate to reach out to them if you are struggling and unsure where to go for help. Contact info for all Faculties is here:

https://registrar.uwo.ca/faculty_academic_counselling.html

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western (<https://uwo.ca/health/>) 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 (24/7 availability).

GENDER-BASED AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Western University [is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence](#) (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website: <https://www.uwo.ca/health/gbsv/index.html>. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.