

WESTERN UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
Undergraduate Course Outline 2020-21

Philosophy Course Number: PHIL 3450
Title: Philosophy of Neuroscience



Fall Term 2020-2021

Asynchronous

Zoom Lecture (live and recorded):
10:30-11:30 a.m. Mon.

Zoom Discussion (live not recorded):
11:30-12:30 a.m. Mon

VoiceThread Lecture Posted 10:30 a.m. Wed.

No classroom meetings-all materials on OWL

Instructor: Jacqueline Sullivan

Office 7170 WIRB

Zoom Office Hours only: Mon 2-3 p.m.,
Wed 11 a.m.-12 p.m.

E-mail: jsulli29@uwo.ca

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, sensation, perception and cognition? What kinds of claims about traditional philosophical issues such as the mind-brain relationship, free will, mental illness 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 each of these questions. The course should be of interest to students majoring in philosophy, cognitive science or neuroscience.

TEXTS

A combination of philosophical and scientific (i.e., methodological, research and review papers/chapters) articles extracted from philosophical and scientific journals, books, textbooks, and anthologies will be made available to students as PDF files on OWL.

OBJECTIVES

Students who successfully complete this course will have a basic understanding of specific aspects of neuroscience and a detailed understanding of the major philosophical issues that arise in the philosophy of neuroscience and neurophilosophy. They will also have gained fundamental training in reading and interpreting seminal works in philosophy of neuroscience and neurophilosophy as well as the skills requisite to critically evaluate this work and formulate and defend their own arguments on topics that interest them.

REQUIREMENTS

There are 4 paper assignments for this course that in combination are worth 100% of the grade. Here is the breakdown:

- (1) Paper 1: (15%)
- (2) Paper 2: (20%)
- (3) Paper 3: (32%)
- (4) Paper 4: (33%)

The ability to write a strong paper for each assignment will depend crucially on you having done the assigned readings for the course and having watched the recorded (VoiceThread) and live (Zoom) lectures each week. I will pass out questions for these writing assignments at least 2-3 weeks before each paper is due. I will provide explicit directions as to how the papers should be structured and the grading rubric.

Papers submitted after the due date will lose 5 points/day and will not be accepted past the 6th day after the due date. There are NO EXCEPTIONS to this rule; you are responsible to plan your schedules accordingly. Paper 3 will not be accepted after the last day of class. NO EXCEPTIONS. Papers are to be submitted via the “Turn It In” link on the OWL course website.

The instructor will provide explicit directions as well as topics for each paper. I will set aside class time to talk about the papers—how they are to be structured and what the precise requirements are.

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** which govern the conduct, standards, and expectations for student participation in Philosophy courses is available in the Undergraduate section of the Department of Philosophy website at <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.

SELF-REPORTED ABSENCE FORM

Students who experience an unexpected illness or injury or an extenuating circumstance (48 hours or less) that is sufficiently severe to temporarily render them unable to meet academic requirements (e.g., attending lectures or labs, writing tests or midterm exams, completing and submitting assignments, participating in presentations) should self-declare using the online Self-Reported Absence portal. This option should be used in situations where the student expects to resume academic responsibilities within 48 hours or less.

The following conditions are in place for self-reporting of medical or extenuating circumstances:

http://westerncalendar.uwo.ca/PolicyPages.cfm?Command=showCategory&PolicyCategoryID=1&SelectedCalendar=Live&ArchiveID=#SubHeading_322

EVALUATION OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

At least three days prior to the deadline for withdrawal from a course without academic penalty, students will receive 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.