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. 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), psychophysics (e.g., Gustav Fechner), experimental psychology (William Wundt), Gestalt psychology (e.g., Edward Titchener), evolutionary psychology (Charles Darwin on emotions in man and animals), William James’ psychology, learning theory and behaviorism (Ivan Pavlov, John Watson and B.F. Skinner) Freudian psychoanalysis, later physiology (e.g., Karl Lashley, Wilder Penfield), developmental psychology (e.g., Alfred Binet & Jean Piaget), artificial intelligence (e.g., Alan Turing), functional neuroanatomy and cognitive neuroscience. We will begin by considering a set of conceptual tools on offer in philosophy of science and philosophy of mind and will then use these tools to guide our analysis of each of the sciences we will consider. This course is designed for and should be of interest to students majoring in the humanities and/or the sciences.