

- Faculté des lettres et sciences humaines
- www.unine.ch/lettres

Séminaire II : Philosophy of mind (2PH2126)

Filières concernées	Nombre d'heures	Validation	Crédits ECTS
Master en sciences cognitives	Séminaire: 2 ph	Voir ci-dessous	6
Pilier B A - philosophie	Séminaire: 2 ph	Voir ci-dessous	6
Pilier principal M A - philosophie	Séminaire: 2 ph	Voir ci-dessous	6
Pilier secondaire M A - philosophie	Séminaire: 2 ph	Voir ci-dessous	6

ph=période hebdomadaire, pg=période globale, j=jour, dj=demi-jour, h=heure, min=minute

Période d'enseignement:

- Semestre Automne

Equipe enseignante

Kathrin Koslicki

Contenu

What is the nature of the mind, what is the nature of the body, and how are the mind and the body related? What is the best way to approach the special features of minds (e.g., consciousness and intentionality)? This seminar examines answers to these questions provided by different philosophical frameworks, such as Cartesian substance dualism, property dualism, reductive and non-reductive physicalism, emergentism, and panpsychism. In particular, we will have occasion to discuss the following questions: What are mental states? How do mental states represent the world? What is consciousness and what sorts of challenges does this phenomenon pose for contemporary research? What is distinctive of emotions in comparison to other mental states? What does it mean for someone to be an agent who has the capacity to act and decide freely? Is Artificial Intelligence really a type of intelligence or does it merely simulate or model intelligence? Throughout the semester, we will investigate to what extent questions about the mind can be approached from a philosophical as well as from an empirical point of view.

Forme de l'évaluation

Internal methods of assessment:

- (1) In-class presentation (30% of internal evaluation grade).
- (2) Attendance, participation, discussion forum (20% of internal evaluation grade).
- (3) A paper (50% of internal evaluation grade).

(1) Students will be asked to give an in-class presentation as part of a group. Group presentations will take place during the second half of the seminar meeting and should incorporate questions to be discussed during the Q&A. Presenters are asked to choose a specific issue related to a topic in the philosophy of mind, and to analyze it from both a philosophical and empirical perspective. Presenters should reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of these respective approaches as well as on whether empirical findings can help us address the relevant philosophical questions.

(2) Regular attendance and active participation constitute an important part of this seminar's learning experience. Students can demonstrate their engagement with the material discussed in this seminar in different ways, e.g., by participating actively in group activities, or by contributing to class discussions and the discussion forum regularly and in a constructive way.

(3) At the end of the semester, students are asked to hand in a paper (approximately 6 pages or ~1500 words long). This paper should summarize, evaluate, and further develop the insights gathered as a result of the group presentation. In addition, students should demonstrate their ability to draw connections between different topics and areas covered over the course of the semester.

External methods of assessment: a 30-minute oral examination on the material covered in this seminar which will take place during the exam period following the seminar. The internal and external evaluation grade each count for 50% of the final grade for this seminar.

Due Dates: Papers are due on Monday, December 15, 2025, and will be returned to students with comments and a grade.

Assessment criteria: level of preparedness; clarity of oral and written expression; specification of technical terms used; structure (e.g., plan, logical organization of ideas); ability to highlight key points; persuasiveness of arguments; originality and creativity of positions defended; speed of reflection during oral presentations.

Language of instruction: The language of instruction for this seminar is English.

URLs	1) https://moodle.unine.ch/course/view.php?id=12796
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Modalités de rattrapage

Students who have handed in a first attempt of their paper and received a grade that is not satisfactory (below 4), will have the opportunity to hand in a revised version of their paper as a second attempt by January 31, 2026.

Documentation

David Chalmers, "The Puzzle of Conscious Experience", Scientific American, December 1995, pp. 80-86

Paul Churchland, Matter and Consciousness, 3rd Edition, Bradford Books, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2013

Daniel Dennett, "Where Am I?", in: Brainstorms: Philosophical Essays on Mind and Psychology by Daniel C. Dennett, Bradford Books, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1978

René Descartes, Meditations On First Philosophy; with Selections from the Objections and Replies, edited by John Cottingham, 2nd Edition, Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2008

Brie Gertler, "In Defence of Mind-Body Dualism", in: Reason and Responsibility: Readings in Some Basic Problems of Philosophy, edited by Joel Feinberg and Russ Shafer-Landau, Thomson Wadsworth, California, 2008, pp. 285-297

Frank Jackson, "Epiphenomenal Qualia", The Philosophical Quarterly, Vol. 32, No. 127 (April 1982), pp. 127-136

William Jaworski, Philosophy of Mind: A Comprehensive Introduction, Wiley-Blackwell, 2011

Thomas Nagel, "What is it Like to Be a Bat", The Philosophical Review, Vol. 83, No. 4 (October 1974), pp. 435-450

David Papineau, "The Rise of Physicalism", in: Physicalism and its Discontents, edited by Carl Gillett and Barry Loewer, Cambridge University Press, New York, NY, 2001, pp. 3-36

Hilary Putnam, "Brains in a Vat", in: Knowledge: Readings in Contemporary Epistemology, edited by Sven Bernecker and Fred I. Dretske, Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 1-21

David Rosenthal, "Two Concepts of Consciousness", Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition, Vol. 49, No. 3 (May, 1986), pp. 329-359

Daniel Stoljar, Physicalism, New Problems of Philosophy, Routledge, Abingdon, Oxon, UK, 2010

The readings for this course will be made available online.

Pré-requis

None.

Forme de l'enseignement

Seminar, 2 hours per week, Monday, 14:00-16:00, Fall semester.

Objectifs d'apprentissage

Au terme de la formation l'étudiant-e doit être capable de :

- Define key concepts and principles used in the philosophy of mind.
- Recognise how prominent figures in the philosophy of mind are influenced by, and have influenced, their predecessors or successors.
- Examine how philosophers of mind apply key concepts and principles to central problems in the philosophy of mind.
- Identify the principal positions associated with prominent figures in the philosophy of mind.
- Describe the main influences and connections between the philosophy of mind and other areas of philosophy as well as connected disciplines, such as cognitive science, psychology, linguistics, etc.
- Formulate well-reasoned arguments orally and in writing for or against positions that are advanced in the philosophy of mind.
- Write a well-organized and well-reasoned argumentative paper on a particular text, problem, or position advanced in the philosophy of mind.
- Work with other students to contribute to group projects.
- Discuss central texts in the philosophy of mind.

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