

## PHILOSOPHY 345: LANGUAGE AND MIND

Lecture: Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:30–4, in G127 Angell Hall  
Section 002 (with Professor Swanson): Tuesdays 4–5, in G160 Angell Hall  
Section 003 (with Dan Singer): Tuesdays 10–11, in 2347 Mason Hall  
Section 004 (with Dan Singer): Tuesdays 1–2, in 3347 Mason Hall

### CONTACT INFORMATION

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### FOCUS OF THE COURSE

What makes human beings different from other animals? What makes us different from computers? To what extent are people different from animals and computers? In this course we will focus on four philosophically intriguing features of people that might help make us different and special.

1. We learn natural languages—very complex things—very quickly, before our brains fully mature. Do human beings have a special “language faculty” that facilitates this learning? If so, what can we learn about it? Where might it come from?
2. We can learn and deploy concepts—also very complex things—very quickly, and again before our brains fully mature. What is a concept? Are some concepts “innate”? How do we learn new concepts? Could a computer learn a concept? How?
3. We are conscious, but contemporary computers aren’t. What is consciousness? What is it for something to be conscious? What evidence is relevant to deciding whether something is conscious?
4. There is “something it’s like” to taste a ripe peach; “something it’s like” to smell burning rubber; in short, experiences have subjective characters. What sort of thing is the subjective character of experience? How could purely physical systems have experiences with subjective character?

### GRADING

- Participation: 10%
- One two-page argument analysis (due 1/20): 10%
- Two four-page papers (due 2/3 and 3/24): 20% each
- Two exams (2/24 and 4/28): 20% each

All assignments must be typed, double-spaced, in a legible font, and emailed to your section leader as a .pdf file. We encourage you to discuss the material with your classmates, but all work you turn in must be your own: see <http://www.lsa.umich.edu/academicintegrity>. Any student who may need an accommodation for any sort of disability should talk with Professor Swanson during office hours.

REQUIRED BOOK

*The Philosophy of Mind: Classical Problems / Contemporary Issues*, second edition. Edited by Brian Beakley and Peter Ludlow. MIT Press, 2006. (Abbreviated 'B&L' in the schedule.)

COURSE WEB SITE

<http://ctools.umich.edu>

SCHEDULE

1/6	<b>Introduction</b>
1/11	<b>Learning a Language</b> Plato, from <i>The Meno</i> (B&L §59) René Descartes, from <i>Replies to Objections V</i> and "Notes Directed against a Certain Program" (B&L §61)
1/13	John Locke, from <i>An Essay Concerning Human Understanding</i> (B&L §62) Jerry Fodor, from <i>The Language of Thought</i> (B&L §65)
1/18	Jean Piaget, "The Psychogenesis of Knowledge and Its Epistemological Significance" (B&L §66) Noam Chomsky, "On Cognitive Structures and Their Development: A Reply to Piaget" (B&L §67)
1/20	<i>Argument analysis due</i> Hilary Putnam, "What is Innate and Why: Comments on the Debate" (B&L §68) Noam Chomsky, From <i>Rules and Representations</i> (B&L §69)
1/25	Jerry Fodor, from <i>Modularity of Mind</i> (B&L §70)
1/27	William Marslen-Wilson and Lorraine K. Tyler, "Against Modularity" (B&L §71)
2/1	Alison Gopnik, "The Theory Theory as an Alternative to the Innateness Hypothesis" (on CTools)
2/3	<i>First paper due</i> <b>The Nature and Origin of Concepts</b> René Descartes, from <i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i> and <i>Replies to Objections I–IV</i> (B&L §43) John Locke, from <i>An Essay Concerning Human Understanding</i> (B&L §44)
2/8	Alexius Meinong, from "The Theory of Objects" (B&L §48) Bertrand Russell, from <i>The Problems of Philosophy</i> (B&L §49)
2/10	Hilary Putnam, from "The Meaning of 'Meaning'" (B&L §51)
2/15	Susan Carey, "Bootstrapping and the Origin of Concepts" (on CTools) Alison Gopnik, "Finding Our Inner Scientist" (on CTools)
2/17	Lera Boroditsky and Jesse Prinz, "What Thoughts Are Made Of" (on CTools)
2/22	<i>Review for midterm</i>
2/24	<i>Midterm exam</i>
3/1	Winter break
3/3	Winter break

3/8	<b>Consciousness</b> René Descartes, from <i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i> II and VI and <i>Replies to Objections II</i> (B&L §2) Steven Pinker, “The Mystery of Consciousness” (on CTools)
3/10	Correspondence between Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia and Descartes (on CTools) John Locke, from <i>An Essay Concerning Human Understanding</i> (B&L §3)
3/15	John Stuart Mill, from <i>A System of Logic</i> (B&L §8) Gilbert Ryle, from <i>The Concept of Mind</i> (B&L §11)
3/17	U. T. Place, “Is Consciousness a Brain Process?” (B&L §12) Hilary Putnam, “The Nature of Mental States” (B&L §13)
3/22	Ned Block, “Troubles with Functionalism (revised)” (B&L §14)
3/24	<i>Second paper due</i> Patricia Smith Churchland, from <i>Neurophilosophy</i> (B&L §17) Bas van Fraassen, from <i>The Empirical Stance</i> (B&L §20)
3/29	<b>Subjective experience</b> Herbert Feigl, from “The ‘Mental’ and the ‘Physical’ ” (B&L §22)
3/31	J. J. C. Smart, “Sensations and Brain Processes” (B&L §23) Saul Kripke, from “Identity and Necessity” (B&L §26)
4/5	Thomas Nagel, “What is it Like to Be a Bat?” (B&L §24) Frank Jackson, “Epiphenomenal Qualia” (B&L §28)
4/7	Sydney Shoemaker, “Functionalism and Qualia” (B&L §25)
4/12	David Lewis, “What Experience Teaches” (on CTools)
4/14	Elizabeth Spelke, “Initial Knowledge: Six Suggestions” (on CTools)
4/19	<i>Review for final exam</i>
4/28	<i>Final exam</i>