

Mind, Matter, and Language

20/21

Semester 1

This course is an introduction to philosophy of mind and philosophy of language. Its aim is to introduce some of the central problems and concepts in these areas, and to develop students' skills in critical thinking, understanding and analysing written texts, and clear writing. The course is suitable for students with little or no prior knowledge in philosophy.

Course Organiser:

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Lecturer:

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Course Secretary:

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Lecture Times and Location

Due to uncertainty about the extent to which the university will be open for in-person classes, information about class timing and format is subject to change, and will be given on the LEARN page for the course.

Lecture Topics and Readings

Week	Topic	Core Reading
Week 1	Words and their meanings (Schwarz)	Paul Grice, "Meaning" (1957) Gottlob Frege, "Function and Concept" (1891)
Week 2	Frege on sense and reference (Schwarz)	Gottlob Frege, "On Sense and Reference" (1892)
Week 3	Russell on descriptions (Schwarz)	Bertrand Russell, "On Denoting" (1905)
Week 4	Semantic externalism (Schwarz)	Saul Kripke, Lecture 1 of <i>Naming and Necessity</i> (1980) Sally Haslanger, "What Good are Our

Week	Topic	Core Reading
		Intuitions?" (2006)
Week 5	Doing things with words (Schwarz)	Ludwig Wittgenstein, <i>Philosophical Investigations</i> (1953), §1-38 Mary Kate McGowan, "Oppressive Speech" (2009)
Week 6	Linguistic Convention (Almotahari)	David Lewis, "Languages and Language" (1975) Stephen Laurence, "A Chomskian Alternative to Convention-Based Semantics" (1996)
Week 7	Language Acquisition (Almotahari)	Stephen Laurence and Eric Margolis, "The Poverty of the Stimulus Argument" (2001) Fiona Cowie, "The Logical Problem of Language Acquisition" (1997)
Week 8	Mental Representation (Almotahari)	Jerry Fodor, "Fodor's Guide to Mental Representation: The Intelligent Auntie's Vade-Mecum" (1985) Jerry Fodor, "Propositional Attitudes" (1978)
Week 9	Computationalism and Artificial Intelligence (Almotahari)	John R. Searle, "Minds, Brains, and Programs" (1980) Daniel Dennett, "Cognitive Wheels: The Frame Problem in AI" (1984)
Week 10	Consciousness (Almotahari)	Thomas Nagel, "What is it like to be a bat?" (1974) Frank Jackson, "Epiphenomenal Qualia" (1982)
Week 11	Review Week	

Recorded videos, slides, and other materials will be available on LEARN.

Further advice on Readings

Encyclopaedias are a good source of extra reading. Avoid Wikipedia (it is often inaccurate on philosophy), but there are good internet encyclopaedias that can be useful:

[The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy \(SEP\)](#)
[The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy \(IEP\)](#)

Websites

We also recommend the following as starting points for your research:

[PhilPapers](#)
[Philosophy Compass](#)
[The Diversity Reading List](#)

You will need to know how to track down sources, including electronic journals, using the library search engine [DiscoverED](#).

Tutorials

You will have weekly tutorials. These give you a chance to further discuss topics and issues in the course and its lectures. Tutorials will take place, at times and places and in a format to be arranged, during weeks 2 through 11 of the semester.

Attendance at tutorials is compulsory for all students on this course. The class tutor will maintain a register of attendance. Unexplained absences will be brought to the attention of your Personal Tutor.

You will be allocated a suitable tutorial group by the Timetabling Department based on your timetable. Should you wish to change the group you have been allocated to, you will need to fill in the *Tutorial Group Change form* on the Timetabling Department's webpage.

Please inform your tutor and the Teaching Office of any absences. Students who miss tutorials may be required to do additional written work.

Tutorial preparation

We will post discussion questions for the tutorials on LEARN. You should try to answer these on your own before you go to your tutorial.

Assessment

This course has three assessments: a **midterm essay** of 1500 words, worth 25% of your final mark, a **final assignment** worth 70% of your final mark, and a number of **short assignments** worth 5%.

Detailed information concerning assignments, essay titles, readings, submission procedures and the Degree Examination will be available on Learn.

Word Counts: The word count of your essay and assignments, including footnotes but excluding bibliography, must not exceed the specified word limit. The precise word count must be written on the coversheet. Overlong essays will be penalised according to the following rule: 1% of the maximum obtainable mark will be deducted for every 100 words, or part thereof, over the word limit. So, exceeding the word limit by 1-100 words incurs a deduction of 1%; exceeding by 101-200 words incurs a deduction of 2%; and so on.

Resits: The resit for this course is a final assignment worth 100%. This will take place in the April/May exam diet. Students will be informed of the exact dates closer to the time.

Visiting undergraduates

The assessment arrangements for visiting undergraduates are the same as for other students.

Mark Schemes

For Philosophy-specific marking guidelines go here:

[Grade-related marking guidelines for Philosophy](#)

For the University's general marking scheme go here:

[Common Marking Scheme](#)

Learning Resources

LEARN

You should regularly check your university email and check for announcements on the course *Learn* page.

The course *Learn* page will provide information concerning:

- General information and announcement about the course
- Lecture notes and slides
- Tutorial arrangements
- Information about assessment arrangements

University of Edinburgh Library

The library's hard-copy and online resources can be searched online via *DiscoverEd*.

Exemplar essays

Anonymised exemplar essays will be on the Learn pages. These are essays written by past students that they have kindly agreed for us to use. We encourage you to read these essays in conjunction with the Philosophy-specific marking guidelines. In doing

so think about the strengths and weaknesses of the essay, why the essays fell into their grade-band, and how they could have been improved.

There are many ways for an essay to fall into a particular grade-band. The Philosophy-specific marking guidelines provide explanation of the many, diverse, ways in which an essay can be a 1st, 2.i, 2.ii, and so on. The exemplar essays only show one way to achieve a certain grade; it is not the only way.

Autonomous Learning Groups

Each course has dedicated Autonomous Learning Groups. It is up to you, the members of the ALG, to organise the meetings. You decide how often to meet and what to do in your ALG. ALGs are designed to help you learn and get to know your classmates; they are not a formal requirement of the course. It is important to note that assessment in your courses is non-competitive: you aren't competing against your classmates, only against the general grade criteria. It is in your interests to help each other.

You could use ALG meetings to:

- Read and discuss the papers together
- Discuss essay-writing and time-management techniques
- Constructively critique draft essays or plans
- Work on presentations or discussion posts that the class may involve
- Share tips on career advice

Please email the Course Organiser if you feel that it would be useful for the group if they joined one of your sessions. Please contact the course secretary if you find it necessary during the semester to transfer into a different group.

Getting in Touch

If you have a question regarding lecture content you should ask it in your tutorial group and/or visit the relevant lecturer to discuss it during their office hour.

For other specifically academic matters you can contact the Course Organiser.

If you have questions not specifically about lecture content, you should contact the Course Secretary.