

Professor Elisabeth Camp

Office: 106 Somerset, Room 514

Office Hours: Mondays 10:30-11:30, and by appointment

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Texts: All readings and handouts will be posted on Sakai.

Course Description

What is a mind? What is special about human minds? We'll tackle these questions by contrasting human minds with computers and with other animal minds, and by integrating theoretical speculation with empirical investigation.

More specifically, we'll ask whether 'strong' artificial intelligence – an autonomous computer mind – is possible, or likely. Could a computer ever hold a real conversation, or experience what it's like to see red? If not, why are we so different? As we become increasingly reliant on technology, can the boundaries of our minds extend beyond our skulls, to include computer and mechanical interfaces?

We'll also ask whether any animals besides ourselves have mental states like beliefs and desires. If not, how should we understand what goes on in their heads? How does conscious experience depend on one's capacities, interests and goals: does rotting flesh smell different to a vulture than to us? Throughout, we'll explore the implications of these questions for our ethical responsibilities to animals and computers.

Course Goals

Students in this course will learn to:

- understand the motivations for and limits of computationalism as a theory of mind.
- understand the major similarities and differences between human and animal minds.
- appreciate competing models of minds and mental phenomena, place them into substantive debate, and form reflective views about how to decide among their conflicting claims.
- analyze and evaluate empirical claims about the relations among minds, brains, and selves.

My hope is that in the long term – say, in five years – you develop an increased curiosity about how human and non-human minds work, a deep appreciation for their complexity, and a strong dose of skepticism about claims to have figured it all out.

In pursuing these aims, students will also acquire the following skills:

- the ability to engage in close reading of sophisticated theoretical and empirical arguments.
- the ability to articulate clear, structured, well-supported arguments for your own conclusions.
- the ability to engage in respectful, reasoned, and passionate debate with your peers about complex topics that lack clear answers.

Course Requirements:

- Daily readings, to be completed *before* class, and brought to class.
- Attendance and participation in class (10% of course grade).
- Weekly blog posts (20% of course grade).
- Three short papers, 2-3 pages (15% each of course grade).
- A final paper, 4-5 pages (25% of course grade).

Blog posts

You are required to post a brief comment (**1 paragraph!**) for **each** forum, according to the role you have been assigned for that comment (see below). The roles rotate each time, so if you're a questioner for the first forum, you're a respondent for the second and a commentator for the third, and so on. For the first forum, students whose last name begins with A-G pose questions; students whose last name begins with H-M answer questions; and students whose last name begins with N-Z comment. After each paper assignment is due, we'll mix up the groups. **Label** your post in the order it is posted: **Q1, A3, C7**, etc.

1) Ask a question about the reading. Due Saturday 10 PM and Wednesday 10 AM.

Cite a specific passage, and briefly (1 sentence) place it within the context of the course as a whole, including other readings and/or topics raised in class. Exegetical and clarificatory questions are totally fine, but make sure to say something about why this question matters, and why you think this is an important, interesting, worthwhile, etc. passage to think about. What broader theoretical and/or empirical questions does it raise? What hangs on the answer?

2) Offer an answer to a question posed by one of your colleagues. Due Sunday noon and Wednesday 5 PM.

Ground your answer in specific features of the text, within the cited passage and/or related passages. Explain why you think this is the best interpretation, compared to at least one alternative. What are the implications of this interpretation for the larger issues raised by your colleague? What questions does your answer leave open? How does it connect to the larger questions we're asking at this point in the course?

3) Comment on one or more of the posts by your colleagues. Due Sunday 10 PM and Wednesday 10 PM.

You might propose an alternative interpretation, or raise a new question in light of a specific question or answer. You might comment on interesting connections among different questions and answers. You might propose a different answer, on behalf of an author we've read, to a question raised in the discussion. Or you might extend the discussion in some other way.

Monday and Thursday mornings BEFORE class: review the questions, answers and comments as fully as you can. **As you enter class: vote** for 1 question, 1 answer and 1 comment by clicking on the appropriate bubble on each of the three questions posted on webclicker.org. (**Sign in** to webclicker.org with the Class ID: **IntroMind-67**.)

Papers should be 'blinded' (by substituting your student ID for your name) and submitted as .pdfs through Sakai. Except in extreme conditions, extensions must be granted well before the due date, and only at my discretion; otherwise, late papers will be downgraded 1/3 letter grade per day.

You are expected to be familiar with and to abide by RU's policy on academic and intellectual integrity: <http://studentconduct.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity>

If you need special accommodations because of a learning disability or for any other reason, please let me know, or have the Office of Disabilities get in touch with me.

Some useful online resources for philosophy of mind, and philosophy more generally:

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <http://plato.stanford.edu>

Dictionary of Philosophy of Mind: <http://philosophy.uwaterloo.ca/MindDict>

David Chalmers' bibliography of Philosophy of Mind: <http://consc.net/mindpapers>

A Field Guide to the Philosophy of Mind: <http://host.uniroma3.it/progetti/kant/field/>

Schedule of Topics and Readings (subject to change)

From Homunculi to Functionalism

Rationalism and Empiricism

- Th 1/22 Introduction
- M 1/26 Descartes: *Meditation 2*; *Discourse on the Method* (excerpt)
Locke: *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (excerpt)

Behaviorism and Functionalism

- Th 1/29 Ryle: “Descartes’ Myth”; “Knowing How and Knowing That”
- M 2/2 Watson: “Psychology as the Behaviorist Views It”
- Th 2/5 Turing: “Computing Machinery and Intelligence”

First Paper Assignments Handed out

How Do Minds Happen?

Computation and Intentionality

- M 2/9 Fodor: “Why There Still Has to Be a Language of Thought”
- Th 2/12 Fodor cont’d
- M 2/16 Searle: “Minds, Brains, and Programs”
- Th 2/19 Fodor and Searle

First Papers Due

Putting the ‘Function’ into Functionalism

- M 2/23 Dretske: “If You Can’t Make One, You Don’t Know How It Works”;
“The Nature of Thought” (excerpt)
- Th 2/26 Dennett: “True Believers”; “Evolution, Error and Intentionality”
- M 3/2 Mueller: “How Computer Chess Programs Are Changing the Game”

Second Paper Assignments Handed out

How Low Can You Go?

- Th 3/5 Davidson: “Rational Animals”
- M 3/9 de Waal: “The Brains of the Animal Kingdom”

Second Papers Due

- Th 3/12 McGeer and Pettit: “The Self-Regulating Mind”

3/16-19 SPRING BREAK

Where Does it End? Mental Boundaries

Functionally Restricted Minds

- M 3/23 Weiskrantz: “Some contributions of neuropsychology of vision and memory to the problem of consciousness”
Fang and He: “Cortical responses to invisible objects”

- Th 3/26 Owen et al: "Detecting Awareness in the Vegetative State"
 Monti et al: "Willful Modulation of Brain Activity in Disorders of Consciousness"
 Bressman & Reidler: Response to Monti et al
 Groopman: "Silent Minds"

Third Paper Assignments Handed out

Functionally Extended Minds

- M 3/30 Bach-y-Rita & Kercel: "Sensory substitution and the human-machine interface"
 Leuthardt et al: "Using the electrocorticographic speech network to control a
 brain-computer interface in humans"
 Th 4/2 Clark and Chalmers: "The Extended Mind"
 Brooks: "The Outsourced Brain"
 M 4/6 Putnam: "The Meaning of 'Meaning'" (excerpt)
 Th 4/9 Burge: "Individualism and the Mental" (excerpt)

Third Papers Due

What is It Like? Locating Consciousness in Functionalism

- M 4/13 Lewis: "Mad Pain and Martian Pain" (including Postscript)
 Th 4/16 Jackson: "What Mary Didn't Know"
 M 4/20 Nagel: "What is it Like to be a Bat?"
 Akins: "A Bat without Qualities?"
 Th 4/23 Finkel: "The Blind Man Who Taught Himself to See"
 M 4/27 Dennett: "Animal Consciousness: What Matters and Why"
 Dawkins: "The Scientific Basis for Assessing Suffering in Animals"
 Th 4/30 Conclusion

Final Paper Topics Handed Out

- M 5/4 NO CLASS

- M 5/11 **Final Papers Due**