PHIL S165/CGSC S165:
The Philosophy and Cognitive Science of Consciousness

Yale Summer Session B, 2020
Tues/Thurs 1:00-4:15 pm (Eastern Standard Time)

Instructor: Joanna Lawson (I know my e-mail says “Blake-Turner”, but I go by Lawson!)
Email: joanna.blake-turner@yale.edu
Office hours: time to be announced

Course Description
Conscious experience is at once both completely familiar and utterly mysterious: how is it that the electrical activity in a lump of gray matter—the brain—gives rise to the technicolor phenomenology of our conscious experience? If human beings are just biological machines, then how is it possible that we have a subjective point of view on the world? Why are we not just mindless robots, that produce behavior in light of stimulations from the environment, but lack any inner awareness or consciousness? In this class we will read, and bring together in conversation, cutting edge work from philosophy, psychology, and the neurosciences on the nature of consciousness. No background in philosophy or cognitive science is expected.

Learning Objectives
By the end of this class, you will be able to:
- Identify key philosophical and scientific challenges for theorizing consciousness
- Recognize and explain various physicalist theories of consciousness
- Appraise the effectiveness of these theories of consciousness, keeping in mind key philosophical and scientific challenges

Required Texts
All required readings will be available to you electronically on Canvas, so there is no need to buy anything for this class

Course Schedule
This schedule is subject to change, depending on time constraints. I will announce all changes in advance over Canvas and in class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, June 30</td>
<td>Introduction to course</td>
<td>Chalmers, preface to <em>The Conscious Mind</em></td>
<td>Portfolio project #1 assigned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The “hard problem” of consciousness</td>
<td>Chalmers, “Facing Up to the Hard Problem of Consciousness”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Assignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Thursday, July 2 | Can consciousness be explained within a physicalist framework?        | Leibniz, selections from the *Monadology*  
Jackson, “What Mary Didn’t Know”                                                                 | Portfolio project #1 DUE by the time class begins  
Portfolio project #2 assigned |
| Tuesday, July 7  | Scientific methods and difficulties                                    | Wu, selections from “The Neuroscience of Consciousness”  
Guitchounts, “An Existential Crisis in Neuroscience”  
Irvine, “Old Problems with New Measures in the Science of Consciousness” | View summary assigned            |
| Thursday, July 9 | Theory 1: Global Neuronal Workspace                                     | Dehaene, Chapter 5 of *Consciousness and the Brain*                                        | View summary DUE by 11:59 pm (EST) on Sunday, July 12  
Portfolio project #3 assigned |
| Tuesday, July 14 | Theory 2: Recurrent Processing                                           | Lamme, “Cognitive Neuroscience: How neuroscience will change our view on consciousness”   | Portfolio project #3 DUE by the time class begins |
| Tuesday, July 21 | Theory 4: Information Integration                                       | Mørch, “The Integrated Information Theory of Consciousness”                                 | Pro/con summary DUE by 11:59 pm (EST) on Wednesday, July 22 |
| Thursday, July 23| Review of physicalist theories                                          | No additional reading                                                                      |                                 |
| Tuesday, July 28| Beyond physicalism: dualism and panpsychism                             | Goff, “Panpsychism is Crazy, but It’s Also Most Probably True”  
Gertler, “In Defense of Mind-Body Dualism”                                                                 | Portfolio project #5 assigned |
| Thursday, July 30| Final exam                                                              | No additional reading                                                                      | Portfolio project #5 DUE by the time class begins |
Assignments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percent of Final Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading responses</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>View summary</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro/con summary</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portfolio project (subdivided into 5 different parts, each worth 5% of your total grade)</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final exam</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Explanation of Assignments

*Class participation:* On the first day of class, we will decide together what sort of participation requirements are appropriate for this particular class size and format. I will send around a document detailing the standards we set for ourselves, so that we can hold each other accountable. Whatever the standards we collectively set, however, I encourage you to talk to me (during office hours or over email) if you worry that you will struggle to fulfill the participation requirement.

*Reading responses:* At the beginning of most class periods, there will be a short assignment asking you to engage in some way with the assigned reading for that day. These will each be graded out of 10 points. At the end of term, I will drop your lowest reading response score.

*View summary:* You will write a short (500 word) summary of either the Global Neuronal Workspace view of consciousness or the Recurrent Processing view of consciousness. The choice is yours which you wish to summarize. The summary will explain, as if to someone who knows nothing about the science or philosophy of consciousness, how the view proposes to explain consciousness. There will be more explanation of this assignment, and a grading rubric to accompany it, provided on the day the task is assigned.

*Pro/con summary:* You will write a short description of the biggest *advantage* and the biggest *disadvantage* for one view of consciousness. For this assignment, you may choose between the Higher-Order Thought theory and the Information Integration theories of consciousness. You will briefly explain both what you take to be the biggest advantage of the view (500 words) and the biggest disadvantage of the view (500 words). It is extremely important that you explain *why* these things are (dis)advantageous, according to you. There will be more explanation of this assignment, and a grading rubric to accompany it, provided on the day the task is assigned.

*Portfolio project:* Over the course of the summer term, I will assign short reflective writing pieces, sometimes accompanied by tasks or challenges of one sort or another. These will be graded based on how honestly you approach the assignment, rather than on how perfect your responses are. This project will be completed in five stages over the course of the semester.

*Final exam:* There will be an in-class final exam consisting of multiple choice and short answer questions.
Grading Policies

Late work: Due dates for assignments are firm. For every 24-hour period that an assignment is late, it will be docked one full letter grade (10%). If you have arranged for an extension in advance, this policy does not apply.

Extensions: You may pre-arrange an extended deadline. If you think you need an extension on an assignment please contact your TF at least 24 hours in advance of the original deadline.

Grade disputes: If you think that you deserve a different grade on an assignment than the grade you originally received, please discuss this with your TF. They will explain their reasoning to you, and if it turns out that they have indeed made some sort of mistake, they may decide after to alter your grade. If, after speaking with your TF, you are still unsatisfied, you have the option of having me re-grade the assignment. I will give the assignment the grade I think is fair. This may be lower than the grade your TF originally gave you.

Grading scale:

A-range: A = 100-94% ; A- = 93-90%
B-range: B+ = 89-87% ; B = 86-84% ; B- = 83-80%
C-range: C+ = 79-77% ; C = 76-74% ; C- = 73-70%
D-range: D+ = 69-67% ; D = 66-60%

Plagiarism and academic integrity: You are expected to acknowledge the sources you use in your research and in forming your ideas. Plagiarism, or using someone else’s words or ideas without acknowledging the original source, will result in a grade of zero on the assignment in question. Though it is sometimes easy to tell what constitutes academic dishonesty, sometimes things are less clear. Your TF and I will be more than happy to discuss questions you might have. It is always better to ask than to plagiarize accidentally. Helpful guidelines for understanding appropriate citing techniques can also be found here: https://poorvucenter.yale.edu/writing/using-sources/understanding-and-avoiding-plagiarism

Glossary

I realize that not all of you will be familiar with everything we take for granted in the Yale academic sphere. Below find the definitions of a few important words/phrases. (I have almost certainly forgotten to explain some things that it would be helpful to know. Please tell me what confuses you so I can update this glossary for future classes!)

Canvas: website on which most course information (including readings, rubrics for assignments, etc.) is posted. The link is: canvas.yale.edu. Once you log in, you can view information for any course you are taking at Yale. We’ll do a short tutorial of Canvas’s features on the first day of class.

Office hours: times I have reserved in the week to be available on Zoom for questions, chats about course material, or discussions of any other concerns you may have. You can come in to office hours unannounced, or email me ahead of time to let me know you’re coming. Don’t feel restricted to office hours, though! You are always welcome to talk to me before or after class, or to set up an appointment at some other time.

TF: short for “teaching fellow”; the TF is a teaching assistant who is also a graduate student in philosophy. There will be one or two TFs in the class (or maybe none at all, if the class is very small). If there is more than one, the TFs will be in charge of a particular portion of the class.
Your TF will grade your assignments and will be available to you to help explain things, or answer questions. Think of them as additional professors who are there to help you learn.

**Zoom:** the online software we will be using to meet as a class. There is a Zoom tab on the course Canvas website which will have a link to the meeting for the day. We’ll do a short tutorial of Zoom’s features on the first day of class.