Consciousness, Intentionality, Embodiment

PHIL 450 – Senior Seminar
PHIL 450 – CONSCIOUSNESS, INTENTIONALITY, EMBODIMENT

FALL 2006
MYBK 206
TR 1:40-2:55

Professor Christian Coseru
Office: 4B Glebe Street, Room 205
Office hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 1-3 p.m., and by appointment
Office Phone: 943-1935
Email: coseruc@cofc.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Listen to the sound of a Mozart concerto, taste the flavor of a strong espresso, or feel the cool breeze of a spring morning. What is it like to have these experiences: to perceive, desire, or know something? What are the structures of conscious experience? How is perceptual consciousness different from emotion, memory, or imagination? As we examine our experience we immediately realize that that there is something it is like to be conscious. Three questions emerge in this process of reflective examination: First, why is there something it is like to be conscious? Second, how are we to understand the intentional structure of consciousness, the fact that our consciousness appears to be always directed at something? Third, to what extent is our conscious experience shaped and conditioned by the body? In this class, we will examine some of the ideas and theories about consciousness, intentionality, and embodiment that are at the heart of the new interdisciplinary field of Consciousness Studies. We will primarily draw from work in the philosophy of perception, phenomenology, cognitive psychology, and Buddhist philosophy.

REQUIRED TEXTS (available at the College Bookstore)

Hubert L Dreyfus, Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time, Division I, BITW
David W Smith, & Amie L Thomasson, eds., Phenomenology and Philosophy of Mind, PPM
Clarendon, Press, Oxford, 2005
Max Velmans, & Susan Schneider, eds., The Blackwell Companion to Consciousness, BCC
Additional readings on WebCT

RECOMMENDED READING


TENTATIVE READING ASSIGNMENTS

Jan 13-15 Introduction: Consciousness, Intentionality, and Embodiment;
Problems of Consciousness: Frith & Rees (BCC: 9-22); Tye (BCC: 23-34)
I. Consciousness
Extent of Consciousness: Rethinking the evolution of consciousness: Polger (BCC: 72-86)
Jan 27-29 Varieties of Conscious Experience: Allan Hobson (BCC 101-113), Panksepp (114-129)
Pace-Schott & Allan Hobson (BCC: 141-153); Fontana (BCC: 154-162; 163-172)
Jan 29 first short essay due in class
II. Approaches to the Study Consciousness

Feb 3-5
Phenomenology and Fringe Consciousness: Gallagher (BCC: 686-695); On the Inescapability of Phenomenology: Carman (PPM: 67-88)
First-person Approaches: Thomasson (PPM: 115-137)

III. Consciousness and Being

Feb 10-12
Dreyfus on Heidegger's Phenomenological Project (BITW: 10-39)
Dreyfus on Heidegger’s Phenomenological Project (BITW: 40-87)

III. Intentionality

Feb 17-19
Attention and Experience: Siewert (PPM: 271-293); Strawson (PPM: 41-65)
Graham, Horgan, and Tienson (BCC: 468-482); Noë (BCC: 504-510)

IV. Embodiment

Feb 24-26
Worldliness and the Cartesian Self: Dreyfus (BITW: 88-127); Bodily Awareness: Bermúdez (PPM: 295-315)

Feb 26
second short essay due in class

V. Consciousness and Reflexivity

Mar 10-12
Woodruff Smith (PPM: 93-114); Bickle & Ellis (PPM: 140-165)

Mar 17-19
Garfield, A Buddhist Debate on the nature of awareness (WebCT reading)

VI. Theories of Consciousness

Mar 24-26
Hard Problem: Chalmers (BCC: 225-235); Global workspace: Baars (BCC: 236-246);
HOT: Carruthers (BCC: 277-287); Dennett on the nature of consciousness: Schneider (BCC:313-323);

Mar 31 - Apr 2
Biological naturalism: Searle (BCC: 325-334); Mysterianism: Rowlands (BCC: 335-344)
Dualism & reflexive monism: Velmans (BCC: 346-358); Naturalistic dualism: Chalmers (BCC: 359-367);

April 7
Final paper due in class

Apr 7-9
Student presentations

Apr 14-16
Student presentations

Apr 21-23
Student presentations

You must bring the assigned text(s) to class. You are expected to read on average 50-60 pages a week.

ASSIGNMENTS AND PERCENTAGES: two short essays (15% each), class presentation (15%), final paper (35%), participation (20%).

Short Essays (15% each). I will be providing a list of possible topics for your first two short essays. The essays should be around 2,000–2,400 words long.

Class Presentation (15%). The format of the class presentations will be discussed as time approaches. It will include both original and critical components (you will be presenting your own research as well as critically evaluating the research of your colleagues). Your presentation will be evaluated on the basis of a number of different criteria, including preparation, delivery, interest, and depth of research.

Final Essay (35%). Your final essay will be on a topic of your choosing, though that topic should dovetail reasonably closely with that of your class presentation. Think of it as a summary of your research project for an educated audience. We will be talking about these essays on an individual basis. They should be between 3,000 and 4,000 words and comprise a significant amount of independent research.

REQUIREMENTS

1. It is essential that you attend classes! More than five unexcused absences will adversely affect your grade and may result in your dismissal from the class.

2. If you fail to bring the assigned readings to class you will not be able to follow the discussion. You are encouraged to annotate and add marginal comments to all of the material discussed in class.

3. Keep in mind that the reading assignments are tentative. Expect changes throughout the semester. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to find out how far we have gotten in the current reading assignment or whether any changes have been made to the list of readings assignments.
4. Due dates for all assignments are clearly marked in the syllabus (make sure you add them to your calendar). Dates for the individual student presentations will be negotiated later. You must complete all assignments in order to pass this class.

5. Late assignments will only be accepted if you can show that a real emergency prevented you from turning it in on the due date.

EXPECTATIONS

1. How well you do in this class will depend in large measure on how well you prepare yourself for each class. Read the entire assignment at least once, and mark any passage, concept, or idea that you have trouble understanding, and bring it up in class. Coming to class unprepared, apart from annoying your colleagues, will also adversely affect your participation grade.

2. This is a philosophy seminar on a topic of wide academic and popular interest and you are expected to get involved in the material. It is not enough to identify a particular philosophical claim, scientific finding or theory. You should be prepared to explain it, argue for or against it, point out its strengths and weaknesses, the evidence on which it is based (if any), and its overall merit (or lack thereof). As a rule, make sure you come to the seminar with at least two or three thoughtful questions from your readings.

3. You will continuously learn new and unfamiliar concepts and theories, and get acquainted with a certain amount scientific data. It is your responsibility to construct a glossary of all the technical terms with appropriate definitions.