

# Phil & Cog Sci of Consciousness

PHIL S165

The Philosophy and Cognitive Science of Consciousness

Yale Summer Session B, 2022

Monday/Wednesday 1 - 4:15 pm Eastern

**Instructor:** Joanna Lawson (I know that it lists my name as Blake-Turner, but I go by Lawson!)

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## 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 theories of consciousness
- Appraise the effectiveness of these theories of consciousness, keeping in mind the 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. Find required readings in the "Files" tab.

## Course Schedule

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

Date	Topic	Reading	Assignments
<b>Monday, July 4</b>	Introduction to course  The “hard problem” of consciousness	Chalmers, “Facing Up to the Hard Problem of Consciousness”	Independent research assigned
<b>Wednesday, July 6</b>	Are you conscious? How would you know?	Keith Frankish, “Illusionism as a theory of consciousness”  Fred Dretske, “How do you know you are not a zombie?”	
<b>Monday, July 11</b>	Dualism	Spackman, “Consciousness and the Prospects for Dualism”  Jackson, “What Mary Didn’t Know”  Descartes, selections from the <i>Meditations</i>	

<b>Wednesday, July 13</b>	<p>Introduction to physicalist theories of consciousness:</p> <p>How can we investigate consciousness scientifically?</p>	<p>Brouillette, "<a href="#">New Brain Maps Can Predict Behaviors</a>"</p> <p>Kriegel, "Beyond Neural Correlates of Consciousness"</p> <p><i>Optional: Paul, "Metaphysics as Modeling"</i></p>	
<b>Monday, July 18</b>	<p>Physicalist Theory 1 &amp; 2:</p> <p>Global Neuronal Workspace</p> <p>Recurrent Processing</p>	<p>Dehaene, Chapter 5 of <i>Consciousness and the Brain</i></p> <p>Lamme, "Cognitive Neuroscience: How neuroscience will change our view on consciousness"</p>	<p>Independent research #1 DUE by the time class begins</p> <p>View summary assigned</p>
<b>Wednesday, July 20</b>	<p>Physicalist Theory 3: Higher-Order Thought</p>	<p>Brown, et al., "Understanding the Higher-Order Approach to Consciousness"</p>	<p>View summary DUE by 11:59 pm (EDT) on <u>Friday, July 17</u></p> <p>Pro/con summary assigned</p>
<b>Monday, July 25</b>	<p>Physicalist Theory 4: Integrated Information Theory</p>	<p>Mørch, "The Integrated Information Theory of Consciousness"</p>	<p>Independent research #2 DUE by the time class begins</p>

<b>Wednesday, July 27</b>	Panpsychism	Chalmers, "Panpsychism and Panprotopsychism"  Nagasawa, "A Panpsychist Dead End"	Pro/con summary DUE by the time class begins
<b>Monday, August 1</b>	Review	No additional reading	
<b>Wednesday, August 3</b>	Final exam	No additional reading	

## Assignments

Assignment	Percent of Final Grade
<b>Class participation</b>	10%
<b>Reading responses</b>	10%
<b>Independent Research</b> (subdivided into 2 parts, each worth 10% of your total grade)	20%

<b>View summary</b>	20%
<b>Pro/con summary</b>	20%
<b>Final exam</b>	20%

## 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 two reading response scores.

*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 Integrated Information theory 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.

*Independent research:* Over the course of the term, you will be asked to engage with two different sources which deal, in some way, with consciousness. Each of your sources should be from a different medium (the one exception to this is that you may respond to two scholarly journal articles). Examples of media include: TV shows, plays, movies, books, newspaper articles, popular science articles, blog posts, podcasts, and scholarly journal

articles. I'll provide suggestions of things to check out, but you are free to choose something not on my list. This is your chance to explore the things that excite you about consciousness that we might not have time to cover in class. Are plants conscious? What about robots? How can you tell if a comatose patient is conscious? How do various drugs affect consciousness? After you read, listen to, watch, or otherwise engage with your outside source of choice, you'll turn in an assignment designed to help guide your engagement with the piece.

*Final exam:* There will be an in-class final exam consisting of multiple choice, short answer, and essay 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 TA 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 TA. 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 TA, 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 TA 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 TA and I will be more than happy to discuss any 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> (Links to an external site.)

## 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](https://canvas.yale.edu) (Links to an external site.). 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.

**TA:** short for "teaching assistant". There will be one or two TAs in the class (or maybe none at all, if the class is very small). If there is more than one, the TAs will be in charge of a particular portion of the class. Your TA 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. (I may occasionally slip up and say "TF", short for "teaching fellow", instead of "TA", but the terms are totally interchangeable.)

**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.