PHIL482 Philosophy of Psychology: Subjectivity (3 credits).

Prerequisite: six credit hours in philosophy; one of which must be PHIL280 or PHIL366.

MW: 2.00-3.15 pm, Skinner 1112.

Instructor: Peter Carruthers. pcarruth@umd.edu Office hours: Tu 12-2.

1. **Course description**

Consciousness has been described as a “final frontier” for science, comparable to the problem of the origin of the universe; and explaining consciousness has been called the “hard problem.” Some people deny that consciousness can be explained; and some claim that consciousness shows the inadequacy of functionalist and/or physicalist accounts of the mental. Others have attempted to explain consciousness in natural terms, but there are heated disputes about the kind of explanation that is needed. This course will examine a range of recent approaches to consciousness, looking first at some of the empirical data, then at skeptics about explicability, and then focusing especially on attempts to provide a naturalistic theory. The aim of the course is to introduce students to these debates, and to encourage them to engage with those debates in a sophisticated and knowledgeable way.

2. **Course texts and expectations of students**

All of the texts to be used in the course are made available via ELMS.

Other papers may need to be consulted when writing the term paper or preparing for the final. Use Google Scholar, or the papers accessible on-line at: http://consc.net/online.html

This is an immense resource, containing over a thousand papers on the philosophy of consciousness (as well as many on the science of consciousness). Some judicious additional reading within it should be done when preparing the term paper and final exam essays.

The course will follow the tentative schedule outlined in #5 below. The reading associated with each week should be studied in advance. The instructor will present some of the highlights, and will explain some of the more difficult ideas, but a significant proportion of each session will be devoted to class discussion. To be effective, this requires advance reading.

Students are expected to attend regularly, and to be actively involved throughout. All laptops, cellphones, and other electronic devices will need to be turned off during classes. This is both to
facilitate active learning and as a courtesy to other learners. Readings should be printed and brought with you to class. (Note that this is the only expense involved for this class.)

3. Course requirements

Grades for the course will be based upon a number of components, which are described below.

(a) Three one-page summaries of key arguments (5% of the grade each, 15% in total).
   (1) What is the knowledge argument and what is it designed to show? — Due at the start of class on **Monday Feb 20**.
   (2) What are (philosophical) zombies and what are they supposed to show? — Due at the start of class on **Monday Feb 27**.
   (3) What is the phenomenal concept strategy and what is it supposed to do? — Due at the start of class on **Monday March 12**.
   Late submissions will be penalized by one full letter grade per working day.

(b) A one-page abstract of your term paper (10% of the final grade). This should be presented to the instructor in a one-on-one meeting during the two-week period March 26 to April 6. Missed meetings, but an abstract handed in later, will result in a penalty of one full letter grade.

(c) A term paper on one of the topics given below (25% of the final grade). This is due on **Monday April 16**. Papers should be submitted electronically as a Word or PDF attachment to the instructor’s UMD email address. Term papers should be between 4,000 and 5,000 words in length. Under-length papers will be penalized. The instructor will cease reading over-length papers at the point where he judges that they exceed the word limit.
   Topics:
   (1) Explain and evaluate the “knowledge argument”. Explain how you think that argument should best be responded to.
   (2) Are zombies really possible? What (if anything) follows for the metaphysics of consciousness if they are?
   (3) Is there an “explanatory gap” between all physical, functional, and intentional facts and the facts of phenomenal consciousness? Is the gap a genuine one, or somehow illusory?
   Late submissions will be penalized by one full letter grade per working day.

(d) A final exam, which will be held on **Wednesday May 16, 1.30-3.30 pm** (40% of the final grade). The exam will cover the second half of the course only (from Spring Break onwards). It will require you to write 4 essays (of 3-4 pages each) selected from a larger number of questions.
   The final exam will be pre-released in the final regular class of term (Wednesday May 9).
This will give you a full week to prepare your answers in advance. You may not, however, bring any papers or books into the exam. Exam answers will be graded anonymously (by folding back the cover sheet and shuffling).

(e) Class contribution (10% of the final grade). This will take into account both the number and quality of your questions, comments, suggestions, and arguments presented in class over the course of the term.

4. **Assessment policy**

Grades will be assigned in accordance with the following criteria. There are six broad dimensions of assessment:

1. *Presentation, literacy, and organization* (including spelling, grammar, and punctuation; answers should have a beginning, middle, and end, and should work towards a clear goal in a systematic fashion);
2. *clarity* (ideas and arguments should be explained clearly and fully);
3. *relevance* (all and only material relevant to answering the question should be included);
4. *knowledge and understanding* (how much you know about the subject matter and how well you have researched it; a good understanding of the material under discussion also needs to be displayed);
5. *quality of argument* (give strong arguments, and avoid invalidity);
6. *independence, critical stance, and creativity* (the extent to which you evaluate and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the ideas under discussion for yourself).

For purposes of averaging and calculating final grades, the following conversion will be used:


You should note that undergraduate grades at the University of Maryland have recently followed roughly the following distribution at levels 300/400:

A: ±45%  B: ±30%  C: ±15%  Other (D, F, W): ±10%

This normal distribution will be borne in mind when assigning the grades for this course.

5. **Schedule and readings**

The course will follow the tentative schedule outlined below. The reading associated with each week should be studied *in advance*. All readings are accessible through ELMS.

January 25 — Course business & the case for physicalism

Peter Carruthers, *The Nature of the Mind* ch.5 (sections 1 and 2 only)
Week of Jan 30 — Kinds of consciousness & dual visual systems
   Milner & Goodale (1998) Precis of *The Visual Brain in Action*, *Psyche*

Week of Feb 6 — The global neuronal workspace
   Bernard Baars (1997) In the theatre of consciousness, *Journal of Consciousness Studies*
   Dehaene et al. (2006) Conscious, preconscious, and subliminal processing, *TICS*

Week of Feb 13 — “What it’s like” and the knowledge argument
   Thomas Nagel (1974) What is it like to be a bat? *The Philosophical Review*

Week of Feb 20 — The problem of consciousness
   David Chalmers (1995) Facing up to the problem of consciousness. *Journal of Consciousness Studies*

   **One-page summary #1 due on Monday 20th.**

Week of Feb 27 — Is consciousness a fundamental part of the world?

   **One-page summary #2 due on Monday 27th.**

Week of March 5 — The explanatory gap: for and against

Week of March 12 — The explanatory gap again & kinds of reductive explanatory theory

   **One-page summary #3 due on Monday 12th.**

**SPRING BREAK**

Week of March 26 — Theories of mental content & nonconceptual content
   Botterill & Carruthers (1999) *Philosophy of Psychology* ch.7: Content naturalized

   **Meetings about term-paper abstracts in this week or next**
Week of April 2 — First-order representational theories


Meetings about term-paper abstracts in this or previous week

Week of April 9 — Higher-order thought theory

Ned Block (2011) The higher-order approach to consciousness is defunct. Analysis

Week of April 16 — Dispositional higher-order thought / dual content theory

Peter Carruthers (2005) Consciousness ch.5: Dual-content theory

Term paper due on Monday 16th.

Week of April 23 — Same-state theories


Week of April 30 — Animal consciousness?

Peter Carruthers (2004) Suffering without subjectivity, Philosophical Studies

Week of May 7 — A phenomenology of thought?

Michael Tye (2011) Is there a phenomenology of thought? In Bayne & Montague, Cognitive Phenomenology

Wednesday May 16, 1.30-3.30 pm — FINAL EXAM on topics from Spring Break onwards.

6. Students with Disabilities

If you have a disability of any sort that requires an accommodation to be made in the arrangements for the course, you should inform the TA at the start of the course, who will then consult with the University’s Disability Support Service.
7. **Religious Observances and other Absences**

It is the student’s responsibility to inform the instructor of any intended absences for religious observances *in advance*. Students who need to be absent for personal reasons should seek permission *in advance* from the instructor.

For every medically necessary absence from class, a reasonable effort should be made to notify the instructor in advance of the class. When returning to class, students must bring a note identifying the date of and reason for the absence, and acknowledging that the information in the note is accurate.

If a student is absent more than twice, the instructor may require documentation signed by a health care professional.

If a student is absent on days when work is due for submission he or she is required to notify the instructor in advance, and upon returning to class, bring documentation of the illness, signed by a health care professional.

8. **Academic Integrity**

All students are expected to comply with the University’s code of academic integrity. Academic dishonesty of any kind will automatically result in a grade of XF for the course.

The following statement is from the University: The University of Maryland, College Park has a nationally recognized Code of Academic Integrity, administered by the Student Honor Council. This Code sets standards for academic integrity at Maryland for all undergraduate and graduate students. As a student you are responsible for upholding these standards for this course. It is very important for you to be aware of the consequences of cheating, fabrication, facilitation, and plagiarism. For more information on the Code of Academic Integrity or the Student Honor Council, please visit:

http://www.studenthonorcouncil.umd.edu/whatis.html

*Enjoy!*