

# PHIL 3400: MIND, LANGUAGE & REALITY

Spring 2018: M,W, F / 2:00 PM – 2:50 PM BEHS 104

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## CORE COURSE INFORMATION

### I. Class Description

What are minds? Which kinds of beings have them? Are thinking machines possible? Is the human mind a kind of computer? What constitutes personal identity? How do speech and thought connect with the world?

In this class we will study influential answers to these questions, as well as the debates they have prompted, thus providing an introduction to some of the leading themes in recent work (late 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards) in the philosophies of mind and of language.

We will read and discuss landmark texts, including work by Descartes, Locke, Hume, Turing, Searle, Dennett, and Fodor, among others, as well as relevant empirical research in cognitive science.

### II. Objectives

At the end of the semester, the students will:

- Understand a few of the key problems surrounding the notions of representation, rationality and personal identity, as well as some of the main philosophical attempts at dealing with these problems, including the arguments for and against them.
- Become acquainted with the notion of computation and see both its relevance to the explanation of mental phenomena and its limitations in this respect

### III. Texts

There is *no* required text for this class. All required readings will be made available on Canvas.

### IV. Expectations and Requirements

Class attendance is required and I expect you to arrive on time for class. I expect you to read all of the assigned materials and to be prepared to discuss material in class.

The evaluation will consist in: (a) two *exams*, each worth 18% of the final grade, for a total of 36%, (b) three short *written assignments*, each worth 12%, for a total 36%, (c) one *essay*, worth 18%, (d) attendance and participation (10%).