

Phil 285: The Self

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Location: Seminar Room
Office: HSS 8073

Course Description:

This course will be a critical introduction and examination of the self, with a focus on the use of the concept in the psychological and behavioral sciences. The self of course plays an essential, if often tacit, role in many areas of philosophy, including discussions of agency, moral responsibility, introspection, self-knowledge, the nature of consciousness, and personal identity, among many others. Because of this central role in so many distinct areas of philosophy, it is useful to see what the empirical literature (and the philosophical works responding to it) have to say about its nature and features. This is not an exhaustive survey, but a guided tour of a few central topics in understanding the self. It is hoped that students working in a wide range of areas will find something useful in the course material.

Required Texts:

All readings will be made available through an electronic repository.

Grading:

There is a (relatively) short essay for the course and weekly public commentaries (administered through google groups):

Assignments	Value	Due Date
Weekly Commentary	30%	NA
Essay (10-12 pgs)	70%	Mon, March 19th

Commentaries

Each week, by Weds 9pm, each student will be expected to post a substantive reaction and/or commentary on *one* of the week's readings. It should be about a page long (no more), and should offer some questions or critical reactions that could help motivate class discussion.

Course Policies:

To avoid penalties for late assignments, students must provide official documentation explaining why the assignment could not be handed in on time. Late essays without documentation will not be accepted. Late papers without documentation will receive a late penalty of 1/3 letter grade for each day a paper is late, including weekend days (no exceptions).

Reading Schedule (subject to small changes):

What is the Self?

- Week 1 (Jan 11):
William James, Principles of Psychology, Ch. 10 (available **HERE**)
- Week 2 (Jan 18):
Shaun Gallagher “Philosophical Conceptions of the Self: Implications for Cognitive Science”
Galen Strawson, “The Self”
Recommended: Leary and Tangey, “The Self as an Organizing Construct in the Behavioral and Social Sciences”

Methodological Issues

- Week 3 (Jan 25):
Stanley Klein, “The Self and Science: Is It Time for a New Approach to the Study of Human Experience?”
Northoff, Qin, and Feinberg, “Brain Imaging of the Self – Conceptual, Anatomical and Methodological Issues”
Christoff et al, “Specifying the Self for Cognitive Neuroscience”
Recommended: Northoff and Hayes, “Is Our Self Nothing but Reward?”
De Veer and Van Den Bos, “A critical review of methodology and interpretation of mirror self-recognition research in nonhuman primates”

The Self and Emotion

- Week 4 (Feb 1):
Silvia and Eddington, “Self and Emotion”
Harter, “Self-Conscious Emotions” (ch. 6 of *The Construction of the Self*)
Recommended: Damasio, “Emotions and Feelings” (Self Comes to Mind, Ch 5)

Self Control

- Week 5 (Feb 8):
Inzlicht and Schmeichel, “What Is Ego Depletion? Toward a Mechanistic Revision of the Resource Model of Self-Control”
Baumeister, et al, “The Strength Model of Self-Control”

Baumeister and Vohs, “Self-Regulation and the Executive Function of the Self”

The Narrative Self

- Week 6 (Feb 15):
Heersmink, “The Narrative Self, Distributed Memory, and Evocative Objects”
Stawson, “Against Narrativity”
Recommended: Rudd, “In Defense of Narrative”
Damasio, “The Autobiographical Self” (*Self Comes to Mind*, Ch 9)

Self-Awareness

- Week 7 (Feb 22):
von Hippel and Trivers, “The Evolution and Psychology of Self-Deception”
Vazire, “Who Knows What About a Person? The Self–Other Knowledge Asymmetry (SOKA) Model”
Recommended: Carver: “Self-Awareness”

Dynamic Models of the Self

- Week 8 (Mar 1):
Nowak, et al, “Society of Self: The Emergence of Collective Properties in Self-Structure”
Morf and Mischel, “The Self as a Psycho-Social Dynamic Processing System”

The Fragmented Self

- Week 9 (Mar 8):
Huang and Bargh: “The Selfish Goal: Autonomously operating motivational structures as the proximate cause of human judgment and behavior”
- Week 10 (Mar 15):
Pinto et al: “The Split-Brain Phenomenon Revisited: A Single Conscious Agent with Split Perception”
Sui and Humphreys, “The Integrative Self: How Self-Reference Integrates Perception and Memory”