

Sample Syllabus: Mind and Body in East and West (15 weeks)

Instructor

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Course Description

How do mind (or the soul, or the self) and body relate? What kind of relationship is this, if any, and how are we to understand what is being related? In this course, we look at these and related questions from the perspectives provided by two very different traditions: **a)** the Western tradition, which includes views by e.g. the Stoics (atomism), Leibniz (monadology / pre-established harmony), Descartes (dualism of body and mind), and more contemporary thinkers defending e.g. physicalism or pan(proto)psychism, and **b)** the Indian philosophical tradition (Jaina Anekāntavāda, Yoga-Sāmkhyā (dualism of puruṣa and prakṛti), Vedānta (radical illusionistic Advaita-monism, Dvaita-Vedānta (three realities, one independent, two dependent), and Acintya Bheda Abheda), Vaisheshika (conscious atoms), and Buddhism (no self)).

In this discussion-focused course, students will become familiar with the major positions in Western and Indian thought about the nature of the mind/soul/self and explore, to some extent, problematic issues that arise within each tradition. As we look at these issues and contrast the different metaphysical views on the mind and its relation to the body across traditions, we will constantly ask ourselves whether questions that arise within one tradition have counterparts within the respective other and, more generally, take note of the many differences and – perhaps surprisingly – also the many similarities between the various Western and Indian conceptions we consider.

This course is tailored to students already somewhat accustomed to reading philosophical texts, who are familiar with a range of texts (presumably) from the broadly Western philosophical tradition. It is intended as extending an invitation to such students to engage in cross-cultural philosophy, which is here understood as involving the conscious effort of broadening one's philosophical horizon and, thus, one's perspective of the philosophical conversation. Throughout, we will compare positions that are more familiar to most students with positions from a different tradition, contrast important arguments put forward to support or attack them, ask what the driving philosophical questions are taken to be in the respective traditions and how these questions influence the shape of the positions devised to provide solutions for them.

Assessment

Online Tasks (raise weekly questions prior to the session): 10 %

One 1-page summary of one of the assigned readings: 10% (option for 10% extra credit for a second summary)

Seminar presentation (including Q&A): 25%

Term paper / art work with documentation (55 %)

Notes on Assessment:

Weekly Questions: Every student is to raise a trenchant question about one of the assigned readings every week (to be posted on the discussion board until two days prior to the meeting). Weekly presenter(s) are to draw on these questions and try to respond to, or build on them.

1-page summary of one of the assigned readings: Students summarize the important points in one of the assigned readings on one page. Note: students will receive extensive feedback on their summary and the best contributions will be distributed to everyone.

Seminar presentation: Students present the material assigned to the course and raise issues for further discussion. They may focus on issues they find particularly interesting and should incorporate responses to (select) questions raised on the discussion board.

Term paper / art work: Students write a term paper (between 8.000 and 12.000 words) or create a work of art that engages with the topic of the class. If students choose to do the latter, they must provide a

documentation that details the artistic idea, highlights pertinent aspects of the execution, choice of materials, and other details of the art work, and relate the art work to the content of the course.

Schedule [tentative – subject to modification]

Week 1	DUALISM - WESTERN Readings: Descartes Meditations (selections), Correspondence with Princess Elizabeth (selections), van Inwagen on Leibniz' Law (from: <i>Dualism and Physicalism</i>)
Week 2	DUALISM – INDIAN (ĀSTIK) Readings: Zimmer, Larson & Bhattacharya on Sāṃkhya (selection); Sāṃkhyasūtra (selections), Yogasūtra (selections), Quarnström on Buddhist and Jainistic criticisms
Week 3	DUALISM – INDIAN (NĀSTIK) Readings: Jainism (Zimmer, Long, Bajzelj on Jain Ontology, Matilal on Anekāntavāda & on ontological problems)
Week 4	MONISM – WESTERN (I) Readings: Leibniz's Monadology & New Essays (Selections), Garber on Body, Substance, Monad (Selections)
Week 5	MONISM – WESTERN (II) Readings: Physicalism and Functionalism (Smart, Hofstadter, Nagel)
Week 6	MONISM – EASTERN (I) Readings: Advaitā-Vedānta: Shankara's Brāhmasūtra (Selections), Upadeshasāhasri
Week 7	MONISM – EASTERN (II) Readings: Sarma & Sharma on Dvaitā-Vedānta & Gupta on Achintya Bheda Abheda (Selections)
Week 8	ATOMISM – WESTERN (ATOMS AND THE VOID) Readings: on Stoic atomism (Berryman on Ancient Atomism, Betegh on Epicurus), de Harven on Nothing as Something
Week 9	ATOMISM EAST & WEST – KANADA'S VAISHESHKA & CONTEMPORARY PANPSYCHISM Readings: Phillips and Matilal on Vaisheshika atomism, Chalmers, Strawson & Goff on Pan(proto)psychism
Week 10	MIXED VIEWS – HOW METAPHYSICS MATTER Readings: Bhagavadgītā, esp. 2 nd & 3 rd Canto, Jacobi and Sreekumar on textual issues and on deontological vs. consequentialist strands of the arguments
Weeks 11 & 12	SELF – NO SELF, EAST & WEST Readings: Plato (Republic, Phaedrus on the soul, selections), Murdoch on unselfing, dialogue between Murdoch and Krishnamurti (recorded conversation); Heart Sutra, Nagārjuna and Garfield on Shūnyatā and pratītyasamutpāda (emptiness/dependent origination)
Weeks 13-15	puffer; class discussion of abstracts/sketches of term papers / art projects; if desired: revisit and add to previous topics

Course Policies [TBA: Academic Integrity, Disability Services, Statement on Classroom Recording, Statement on Course Materials]