



# PHL 131

## Mind, Meaning and Metaphysics

S2 External 2015

*Dept of Philosophy*

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## General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff

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Credit points

3

Prerequisites

Corequisites

Co-badged status

### Unit description

The unit introduces the big philosophical questions about human nature, personal identity and the meaning of life. Are human beings somehow unique in nature? Do we have distinct selves that endure through time? Do we have free will? What is the relation between our identity and the things that matter to us? We take a broadly historical approach, reading the classic philosophical texts as well as contemporary work. Three themes recur across the unit: the relation of mind and body, the quest for knowledge and the nature of the self. We begin with conceptions of the mind at the dawn of the modern period, asking whether mind is entirely physical or could in principle survive bodily death. We also explore the links between the self, time, and memory. The remainder of the unit introduces some key thinkers of the twentieth century; and we explore their views on freedom, lived experience, and our relations to others. The unit as a whole offers a detailed introduction to controversial questions about the nature of the mind, showing how historical understanding animates current debates, and demonstrating the relevance of philosophy to live modern issues about science, human nature, and culture.

## Important Academic Dates

Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are available at <https://www.mq.edu.au/study/calendar-of-dates>

## Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

You will understand the nature of mind and self using foundational philosophical ideas from the Early Modern period and beyond, at an introductory level.

You will understand contemporary debates about the metaphysics of personal identity, at an introductory level.

You will understand traditional and contemporary debates about the nature of the mind and consciousness.

You will possess basic skills in philosophical analysis.

You will be able to respond to some common theories of mind and personhood in a reflective and critical way.

You will be able to express your own ideas with greater clarity, and construct stronger arguments than previously.

## Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Due
<a href="#">Scaffolded Essay</a>	40%	End of Week 7

Name	Weighting	Due
<a href="#">Final Essay</a>	40%	13/11/2015
<a href="#">Online Discussions</a>	20%	On-going

## Scaffolded Essay

Due: **End of Week 7**

Weighting: **40%**

This assignment will be to provide an analysis and response to a text by, or concerning, René Descartes (1596-1650) and the material from weeks 1-4. Your analysis will be 'scaffolded' by your answering a series of structured questions, each building on the next. This will allow you to do two things (i) understand the structure and form of a philosophy essay (ii) gauge your understanding of Descartes and the philosophical questions his work raises.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- You will understand the nature of mind and self using foundational philosophical ideas from the Early Modern period and beyond, at an introductory level.
- You will understand traditional and contemporary debates about the nature of the mind and consciousness.
- You will possess basic skills in philosophical analysis.
- You will be able to respond to some common theories of mind and personhood in a reflective and critical way.
- You will be able to express your own ideas with greater clarity, and construct stronger arguments than previously.

## Final Essay

Due: **13/11/2015**

Weighting: **40%**

This assignment will build upon the skills you developed during your first assignment, and will require you to answer an essay question on some subsection of material covered during weeks 5-12. Your word limit will be approximately 2000 words, and you will be allowed to use material and resources beyond those deemed essential for the essay question.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- You will understand the nature of mind and self using foundational philosophical ideas from the Early Modern period and beyond, at an introductory level.
- You will understand contemporary debates about the metaphysics of personal identity, at an introductory level.

- You will understand traditional and contemporary debates about the nature of the mind and consciousness.
- You will possess basic skills in philosophical analysis.
- You will be able to respond to some common theories of mind and personhood in a reflective and critical way.
- You will be able to express your own ideas with greater clarity, and construct stronger arguments than previously.

## Online Discussions

Due: **On-going**

Weighting: **20%**

Participation in online fora will help to develop your skills in communication, collaboration, and awareness of diversity. Your participation in such discussions and activities will contribute to your overall assessment in two ways:

(i) through active involvement in online

(ii) by submitting a completed "reading sheet" for each online forum - a short set of questions relating to the reading that week.

Active involvement online is especially important and includes discussion of material, debate, presenting and defending your own arguments, collaborating in philosophical analysis, giving and receiving feedback on ideas and comments, explaining and clarifying ideas, practising of technical philosophical skills, and more. This requires you to prepare well each week - you can do this preparation by completing the "reading sheet" before you post any online contribution. The more prepared you are, the more you participate in these activities, the more likely you will do well in other assessments.

No grades are received for simply posting unreflective content - the way to do well is to prepare in advance, take part, and submit your reading sheets.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- You will understand the nature of mind and self using foundational philosophical ideas from the Early Modern period and beyond, at an introductory level.
- You will understand contemporary debates about the metaphysics of personal identity, at an introductory level.
- You will understand traditional and contemporary debates about the nature of the mind and consciousness.
- You will possess basic skills in philosophical analysis.
- You will be able to respond to some common theories of mind and personhood in a reflective and critical way.

- You will be able to express your own ideas with greater clarity, and construct stronger arguments than previously.

## Delivery and Resources

### Required Reading

There will be a core text to read for each tutorial and topic on the course. These will not be very long pieces, and will be made available electronically.=

### Technology Used and Required

We use an iLearn website, and the Echo360 lecture recordings. Lecture notes and any other material you need will be available through the iLearn website. We recommend you have access to a reliable internet connection throughout semester.

### Assignment Submission

Assignments in this course will be submitted electronically, as word documents. **There is no need for a coversheet** - the iLearn assignment submission (Turnitin) involves declaring your details and honesty in submitting your work. Please note, we do not accept submission by email attachment.

### Extensions and Special Consideration

Requests for extensions must, normally, be made in writing before the due date. Extensions of up to 3 days can be granted by your tutor if reasonable grounds are given, and some written documentation can be produced. Work load from other units, or from employment, are not considered reasonable justification.

**Requests for extensions of more than 3 days** should be submitted via a [Disruption to Studies Request](#), which is available in the ask.mq.edu.au portal. Your request should be accompanied by appropriate documentation, such as a medical certificate. Please see the Disruption to Studies policy in the list of policies at the end of this document for further details. Read the policy closely as your request may be turned down if you have not followed procedure, or if you have not submitted a request in a timely manner.

### Penalties for Late Submission

Late submissions of assignments will attract a penalty proportionate to the nature and timeliness of the work. All work must be submitted within 2 weeks of the assessment due date. Outside of this time, special circumstances must be proven to have interrupted your study.

## Unit Schedule

### PHL131 Unit Schedule S2, 2015

#### ***Section One - Foundational Problems in Mind and Knowledge (Dr Albert Atkin)***

Week 1: General Introduction and Descartes on *What can be known*

Week 2: Responding to Descartes - the nature of knowledge; the problem of scepticism

Week 3: Descartes on *The nature of the mind*

Week 4: Responding to Descartes - other kinds of Dualism; Behaviourism

### **Section Two - Identity and The Self (Dr Rachael Brown)**

Week 5: Traditional Accounts of Personal Identity - John Locke

Week 6: Contemporary Accounts of Personal Identity - Derek Parfit

Week 7: Contemporary Accounts of Personal Identity - The Body and the Boundaries of the Self

~ Mid Semester Break ~

Week 8: Moving Beyond Personal Identity - Memory and Agency

### **Section Three - Free will, Consciousness and Cognition (Dr Richard Heersmink)**

Week 9: Free Will

Week 10: Consciousness

Week 11: Extended and Embodied Cognition

Week 12: Artificial Intelligence

## **Policies and Procedures**

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from [Policy Central](#). Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:

Academic Honesty Policy [http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/academic\\_honesty/policy.html](http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/academic_honesty/policy.html)

Assessment Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/assessment/policy.html>

Grading Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grading/policy.html>

Grade Appeal Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/gradeappeal/policy.html>

Grievance Management Policy [http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grievance\\_management/policy.html](http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grievance_management/policy.html)

Disruption to Studies Policy [http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/disruption\\_studies/policy.html](http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/disruption_studies/policy.html) *The Disruption to Studies Policy is effective from March 3 2014 and replaces the Special Consideration Policy.*

In addition, a number of other policies can be found in the [Learning and Teaching Category](#) of Policy Central.

## **Student Code of Conduct**

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct: [https://students.mq.edu.au/support/student\\_conduct/](https://students.mq.edu.au/support/student_conduct/)

## Results

Results shown in *iLearn*, or released directly by your Unit Convenor, are not confirmed as they are subject to final approval by the University. Once approved, final results will be sent to your student email address and will be made available in [eStudent](#). For more information visit [ask.mq.edu.au](#).

## Student Support

Macquarie University provides a range of support services for students. For details, visit <http://students.mq.edu.au/support/>

## Learning Skills

Learning Skills ([mq.edu.au/learningskills](http://mq.edu.au/learningskills)) provides academic writing resources and study strategies to improve your marks and take control of your study.

- [Workshops](#)
- [StudyWise](#)
- [Academic Integrity Module for Students](#)
- [Ask a Learning Adviser](#)

## Student Services and Support

Students with a disability are encouraged to contact the [Disability Service](#) who can provide appropriate help with any issues that arise during their studies.

## Student Enquiries

For all student enquiries, visit Student Connect at [ask.mq.edu.au](http://ask.mq.edu.au)

## IT Help

For help with University computer systems and technology, visit <http://informatics.mq.edu.au/help/>.

When using the University's IT, you must adhere to the [Acceptable Use Policy](#). The policy applies to all who connect to the MQ network including students.

## Graduate Capabilities

### Creative and Innovative

Our graduates will also be capable of creative thinking and of creating knowledge. They will be imaginative and open to experience and capable of innovation at work and in the community. We want them to be engaged in applying their critical, creative thinking.

This graduate capability is supported by:



## Learning outcome

- You will be able to express your own ideas with greater clarity, and construct stronger arguments than previously.

## Assessment tasks

- Scaffolded Essay
- Final Essay
- Online Discussions

## Capable of Professional and Personal Judgement and Initiative

We want our graduates to have emotional intelligence and sound interpersonal skills and to demonstrate discernment and common sense in their professional and personal judgement. They will exercise initiative as needed. They will be capable of risk assessment, and be able to handle ambiguity and complexity, enabling them to be adaptable in diverse and changing environments.

This graduate capability is supported by:

## Learning outcomes

- You will understand traditional and contemporary debates about the nature of the mind and consciousness.
- You will be able to respond to some common theories of mind and personhood in a reflective and critical way.
- You will be able to express your own ideas with greater clarity, and construct stronger arguments than previously.

## Assessment tasks

- Scaffolded Essay
- Final Essay
- Online Discussions

## Discipline Specific Knowledge and Skills

Our graduates will take with them the intellectual development, depth and breadth of knowledge, scholarly understanding, and specific subject content in their chosen fields to make them competent and confident in their subject or profession. They will be able to demonstrate, where relevant, professional technical competence and meet professional standards. They will be able to articulate the structure of knowledge of their discipline, be able to adapt discipline-specific knowledge to novel situations, and be able to contribute from their discipline to inter-disciplinary solutions to problems.

This graduate capability is supported by:

## Learning outcomes

- You will understand the nature of mind and self using foundational philosophical ideas from the Early Modern period and beyond, at an introductory level.
- You will understand contemporary debates about the metaphysics of personal identity, at an introductory level.
- You will understand traditional and contemporary debates about the nature of the mind and consciousness.
- You will possess basic skills in philosophical analysis.
- You will be able to respond to some common theories of mind and personhood in a reflective and critical way.
- You will be able to express your own ideas with greater clarity, and construct stronger arguments than previously.

## Assessment tasks

- Scaffolded Essay
- Final Essay
- Online Discussions

## Critical, Analytical and Integrative Thinking

We want our graduates to be capable of reasoning, questioning and analysing, and to integrate and synthesise learning and knowledge from a range of sources and environments; to be able to critique constraints, assumptions and limitations; to be able to think independently and systemically in relation to scholarly activity, in the workplace, and in the world. We want them to have a level of scientific and information technology literacy.

This graduate capability is supported by:

## Learning outcomes

- You will understand the nature of mind and self using foundational philosophical ideas from the Early Modern period and beyond, at an introductory level.
- You will understand contemporary debates about the metaphysics of personal identity, at an introductory level.
- You will understand traditional and contemporary debates about the nature of the mind and consciousness.
- You will possess basic skills in philosophical analysis.
- You will be able to respond to some common theories of mind and personhood in a reflective and critical way.
- You will be able to express your own ideas with greater clarity, and construct stronger

arguments than previously.

## Assessment tasks

- Scaffolded Essay
- Final Essay
- Online Discussions

## Problem Solving and Research Capability

Our graduates should be capable of researching; of analysing, and interpreting and assessing data and information in various forms; of drawing connections across fields of knowledge; and they should be able to relate their knowledge to complex situations at work or in the world, in order to diagnose and solve problems. We want them to have the confidence to take the initiative in doing so, within an awareness of their own limitations.

This graduate capability is supported by:

## Learning outcomes

- You will understand traditional and contemporary debates about the nature of the mind and consciousness.
- You will possess basic skills in philosophical analysis.
- You will be able to respond to some common theories of mind and personhood in a reflective and critical way.
- You will be able to express your own ideas with greater clarity, and construct stronger arguments than previously.

## Assessment tasks

- Scaffolded Essay
- Final Essay
- Online Discussions

## Effective Communication

We want to develop in our students the ability to communicate and convey their views in forms effective with different audiences. We want our graduates to take with them the capability to read, listen, question, gather and evaluate information resources in a variety of formats, assess, write clearly, speak effectively, and to use visual communication and communication technologies as appropriate.

This graduate capability is supported by:

## Learning outcomes

- You will possess basic skills in philosophical analysis.
- You will be able to respond to some common theories of mind and personhood in a

reflective and critical way.

- You will be able to express your own ideas with greater clarity, and construct stronger arguments than previously.

## Assessment tasks

- Scaffolded Essay
- Final Essay
- Online Discussions

## Engaged and Ethical Local and Global citizens

As local citizens our graduates will be aware of indigenous perspectives and of the nation's historical context. They will be engaged with the challenges of contemporary society and with knowledge and ideas. We want our graduates to have respect for diversity, to be open-minded, sensitive to others and inclusive, and to be open to other cultures and perspectives: they should have a level of cultural literacy. Our graduates should be aware of disadvantage and social justice, and be willing to participate to help create a wiser and better society.

This graduate capability is supported by:

## Learning outcomes

- You will understand traditional and contemporary debates about the nature of the mind and consciousness.
- You will possess basic skills in philosophical analysis.
- You will be able to respond to some common theories of mind and personhood in a reflective and critical way.
- You will be able to express your own ideas with greater clarity, and construct stronger arguments than previously.

## Assessment tasks

- Scaffolded Essay
- Final Essay
- Online Discussions

## Socially and Environmentally Active and Responsible

We want our graduates to be aware of and have respect for self and others; to be able to work with others as a leader and a team player; to have a sense of connectedness with others and country; and to have a sense of mutual obligation. Our graduates should be informed and active participants in moving society towards sustainability.

This graduate capability is supported by:

## Learning outcomes

- You will possess basic skills in philosophical analysis.
- You will be able to respond to some common theories of mind and personhood in a reflective and critical way.
- You will be able to express your own ideas with greater clarity, and construct stronger arguments than previously.

## Assessment tasks

- Scaffolded Essay
- Final Essay
- Online Discussions

## Changes from Previous Offering

We have reduced the number of written assessments

We have changed the content

We have changed the list of readings