



PHIL3063

Consciousness and Self

Session 2, Fully online/virtual 2021

Department of Philosophy

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Session 2 Learning and Teaching Update

The decision has been made to conduct study online for the remainder of Session 2 for all units WITHOUT mandatory on-campus learning activities. Exams for Session 2 will also be online where possible to do so.

This is due to the extension of the lockdown orders and to provide certainty around arrangements for the remainder of Session 2. We hope to return to campus beyond Session 2 as soon as it is safe and appropriate to do so.

Some classes/teaching activities cannot be moved online and must be taught on campus. You should already know if you are in one of these classes/teaching activities and your unit convenor will provide you with more information via iLearn. If you want to confirm, see the list of [units with mandatory on-campus classes/teaching activities](#).

Visit the [MQ COVID-19 information page](#) for more detail.

General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff

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Credit points

10

Prerequisites

130cp at 1000 level or above

Corequisites

Co-badged status

Unit description

This unit explores some of the major traditions in Philosophical and Scientific thinking about Consciousness and the Self. The unit introduces core questions concerning what consciousness is: What can we know about consciousness through scientific enquiry? How can a physical system, such as the brain, be conscious? How do we situate consciousness in a social and cultural context? The unit also introduces philosophical and scientific thinking about the self and introduces questions including: Is there really such a thing as a Self? Is the self narratively constructed? What is the relationship between the self and others?

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:

ULO1: Synthesize and analyze information from a variety of sources concerning foundational concepts and arguments in cognitive science, phenomenology and philosophy.

ULO2: Articulate clearly and coherently philosophical arguments in written and oral form to a variety of audiences.

ULO3: Analyze and critically evaluate philosophical arguments.

ULO4: Apply acquired knowledge and skills in the context of philosophical and cognitive science scholarship.

ULO5: Explain and critically evaluate evidence from a broad range of disciplines including cognitive science, psychology, phenomenology, analytic and continental philosophy and neuroscience.

General Assessment Information

Detailed assessment information and rubrics

Detailed information about each of the assessments, including rubrics and submission instructions is available in the Assessment block in iLearn. Please make sure you read the assessment information carefully.

Special Consideration

Requests for extensions should be submitted via a Special Consideration request, which is available in the <http://ask.mq.edu.au> portal. Your request should be submitted no later than five days after the due date and should be accompanied by appropriate documentation. Please see the Special Consideration 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.

Late Submission Penalty

Unless a Special Consideration request has been submitted and approved, (a) a penalty for lateness will apply – **10 marks out of 100 credit will be deducted per day for assignment submitted after the due date** – and (b) no assignment will be accepted more than seven days (incl. weekends) after the original submission date.

Academic Integrity

In Philosophy, academic honesty is taken very seriously, and a range of methods, including but not restricted to the use of Turnitin, are used to detect plagiarism. Misrepresenting someone else's work as your own may be grounds for referral to the Faculty Disciplinary Committee. If you have questions about how to properly cite work or how to credit sources, please ask the convenor for help and see also the Academic Integrity Policy <https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policies/academic-integrity> Note: All assignments in this unit are individual assignments. Collusion (unauthorised collaboration on individual assignments) is a breach of the Academic Integrity Policy. If in doubt, contact a member of teaching staff. A helpful resource if you would like to know more about referencing and avoiding plagiarism is Macquarie's Academic Integrity Module, available here: <https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/skills-development>. You will need to complete this Module before accessing the unit content, if you have not already done so. More information is available in iLearn.

Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Hurdle	Due
Research Essay	40%	No	7/11/21 (11.59pm)
Short media presentations	20%	No	12/9/21 (11.59pm)
Participation	20%	No	Ongoing
Online Quizzes	20%	No	Fortnightly Sunday (11.59pm)

Research Essay

Assessment Type ¹: Essay

Indicative Time on Task ²: 30 hours

Due: **7/11/21 (11.59pm)**

Weighting: **40%**

An essay based on topics from the course

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Synthesize and analyze information from a variety of sources concerning foundational concepts and arguments in cognitive science, phenomenology and philosophy.
- Articulate clearly and coherently philosophical arguments in written and oral form to a variety of audiences.
- Analyze and critically evaluate philosophical arguments.
- Apply acquired knowledge and skills in the context of philosophical and cognitive science scholarship.
- Explain and critically evaluate evidence from a broad range of disciplines including cognitive science, psychology, phenomenology, analytic and continental philosophy and neuroscience.

Short media presentations

Assessment Type ¹: Media presentation

Indicative Time on Task ²: 15 hours

Due: **12/9/21 (11.59pm)**

Weighting: **20%**

Short format recorded presentations involving audio and/or visual material reflecting on questions posed by the weekly content

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Synthesize and analyze information from a variety of sources concerning foundational concepts and arguments in cognitive science, phenomenology and philosophy.
- Articulate clearly and coherently philosophical arguments in written and oral form to a variety of audiences.
- Analyze and critically evaluate philosophical arguments.
- Apply acquired knowledge and skills in the context of philosophical and cognitive science scholarship.
- Explain and critically evaluate evidence from a broad range of disciplines including cognitive science, psychology, phenomenology, analytic and continental philosophy and neuroscience.

Participation

Assessment Type ¹: Participatory task

Indicative Time on Task ²: 15 hours

Due: **Ongoing**

Weighting: **20%**

Active participation in on-campus or online discussion and activities. Students are expected to be well-prepared, and make a constructive contribution.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Synthesize and analyze information from a variety of sources concerning foundational concepts and arguments in cognitive science, phenomenology and philosophy.
- Articulate clearly and coherently philosophical arguments in written and oral form to a variety of audiences.

Online Quizzes

Assessment Type ¹: Quiz/Test

Indicative Time on Task ²: 15 hours

Due: **Fortnightly Sunday (11.59pm)**

Weighting: **20%**

Online Quizzes

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Synthesize and analyze information from a variety of sources concerning foundational concepts and arguments in cognitive science, phenomenology and philosophy.
- Articulate clearly and coherently philosophical arguments in written and oral form to a variety of audiences.
- Explain and critically evaluate evidence from a broad range of disciplines including cognitive science, psychology, phenomenology, analytic and continental philosophy and neuroscience.

¹ If you need help with your assignment, please contact:

- the academic teaching staff in your unit for guidance in understanding or completing this type of assessment
- the [Writing Centre](#) for academic skills support.

² Indicative time-on-task is an estimate of the time required for completion of the assessment task and is subject to individual variation

Delivery and Resources

Required Reading: There will be a core texts to read for each week of the course. It is mandatory that these be read as tutorial discussions and lectures are based on these. You will also be required to submit weekly discussion guides relating to these readings. The weekly readings will be available via the Leganto service, which is accessible through the ilearn. Additional optional and further readings will be made available electronically on the ilearn in each week. These will be useful for the research essays.

Technology Used and Required: We use an iLearn website, and the Echo360 lecture recordings. Any other material you need will be available through the iLearn website. We recommend you have access to a reliable internet connection throughout the semester.

Assignment Submission: Essay assignments in this course will be submitted electronically, as word documents or PDFs. 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. Reflective blogs will be submitted as audio or video files to an OU Blog submission Link. Resources and advice on how to record these will be provided in task instructions. All assessment deadlines are based on local time in Sydney.

Unit Schedule

Week and lecture topic	Description
PART ONE	CONSCIOUSNESS
1. Introduction	A general introduction to the topic of Consciousness and Selves. Covering a brief history of Western philosophical and scientific investigations of the topic. Providing a precis of the rest of the course and course assessments and details. No Tutorial this week
2. The Hard Problem	We begin our exploration of consciousness by examining some of the central problems: What is qualia? What is the relationship of consciousness and the physical body? Why does the physical configuration of our brains and mechanisms performing cognitive functions give rise to conscious experience? Can conscious experience be accounted for by a physicalist description of the universe? Or do we need a revision to cognitive science and our metaphysical conception of the world?
3. The Science of Consciousness	Having examined some of the core problems of consciousness we turn this week to surveying the recent cognitive science and neuroscientific investigations and models of consciousness. We consider the core questions for how and whether a science of consciousness is possible. In particular, the search for neural correlates of consciousness, what these are, and what these tell us about the nature of consciousness. This will push forward the debates from week 2 on whether we can have a reductive physicalist account of consciousness articulated in terms of a mechanistic explanation.
4. Predictive Processing and the Self	Cognitive science, psychology, and philosophy of mind have long been beset by questions of theoretical unity. A very recent approach to the structure of the mind is predictive processing. This is the claim that our mind-brains are predictive engines: rather than our minds passively waiting for incoming stimuli they actively try to predict what the incoming sense stimuli will be. Our brains then assess the predictive error between the incoming stimuli and the prediction. This is a very hot topic in both philosophy of mind and the cognitive sciences. Some philosophers have claimed that it is a <i>new grand unified theory of the mind</i> (GUT). This is especially important given that there are wide ranging debates about how all the various differing sciences of the mind come together, and whether they can be unified into a single framework. Predictive processing accounts have been applied to a range of philosophical and psychological topics. Recently, philosophers and scientists have proposed that predictive processing can also give an account of the nature of consciousness and tackle the various philosophical and scientific problems here.
5. The Unconscious Mind	How much of our mind is beyond conscious experience? What is the nature of the unconscious? This week we survey a range of philosophical and scientific approaches to the unconscious. We will cover and compare psychodynamic and cognitive approaches to the unconscious. In particular, we will look at the topics of mind-wandering and sleep as phenomena that raise serious questions about a clear-cut distinction between wakefulness and consciousness. And as case studies demonstrating the productive ways in which philosophy, phenomenology, and cognitive neuroscience come together.
PART TWO	SELVES
6. Theories of the Self	Questions on consciousness are intimately tied to questions on <i>the self</i> ; it seems there needs to be a self that is having the conscious experience. In the second part of the course, we turn to the nature of the self and examine its metaphysical and practical implications. We begin with the classical approaches and compare them to modern accounts which place an emphasis on the importance of narratives. We'll look whether there is a continuous unitary self that is the subject of conscious experience, whether the self is best characterised by psychological or bodily continuity, or whether the self is a narrative construction. We'll also consider the wider philosophical, scientific, and ethical implications of these views.

7. Distributed and Embodied Selves	A modern line of research in cognitive science and philosophy stresses the importance of how minds are embodied and embedded in the world. In this week we examine the arguments and evidence that supports the claim that selves are distributed across brain, body, and world. The possibility that the self is not only embodied but also partially constituted by parts of the world raises a range of ethical questions about the status of these external features. For example, if one can argue that the self can be partially constituted by an external object, such as a smartphone, then what is the moral status of any interference on a person's smartphone?
Mid Semester Break (<i>Take a well-earned break</i>)	
8. Disruption of the Self	Cases of neuropathology and psychiatric conditions have often been used in the history of psychology to inform us about the mechanistic organisation of the mind and the brain. But what do these disruptions tell us about the nature of the self? In this week, we will look at certain disorders of the mind, such as schizophrenia and dissociative identity disorder, to explore what they can reveal about the elements of self-conscious experience, the unity of consciousness, and our sense of subjectivity and agency.
9. Agency & Free will	We typically experience our own intentional actions as being <i>caused</i> by our own thoughts. But is this experience an <i>illusion</i> ? Scientific investigations show that both thought and action are caused by prior unconscious mental events (i.e., neural activity). We will look at the interpretations of such findings and examine the implications this has on agency, free-will, and moral responsibility.
PART THREE	OTHERS
10. Understanding Other Minds	In the final part of the course, we turn to the question of other conscious beings and investigate the nature of the self and consciousness from an evolutionary perspective. We begin with a detailed discussion of social cognition with a focus on mental state attribution or 'mindreading'. We will look into the nature of mindreading and its evolutionary significance in enabling us to understand other individuals as having their own conscious experiences and mental states. Then we will examine whether mindreading is a product of biological or cultural evolution, and whether mindreading is prevalent in our everyday social engagements as traditionally thought.
11. Evolution of the Self and Consciousness	In this week, we will look at the evolution problem: Why and when did consciousness evolve? Is consciousness a biological adaptation with a deep evolutionary history? If so, then what is its function and how did it evolve? We will look at recent accounts that consider consciousness as evolving gradually over hundreds of millions of years from ocean dwelling organisms.
12. Animal Selves and Consciousness	Having spent much of the course examining philosophical and scientific questions regarding human consciousness and sense of self, in this lecture we branch out to consider the minds of other animals. Do other animals have a concept of self and self-awareness? What kinds of consciousness is present in other animals? Do they have conscious experiences or an understanding of the minds of other conspecifics? We conclude the taught material on the course by demonstrating how philosophy can help to articulate and investigate these questions.
13. Essay Writing Week	The final week of the course is set aside for research in which students will research and write their essay for the final assignment. No Tutorial or Lecture in this week.

Policies and Procedures

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

- [Academic Appeals Policy](#)
- [Academic Integrity Policy](#)
- [Academic Progression Policy](#)
- [Assessment Policy](#)

- [Fitness to Practice Procedure](#)
- [Grade Appeal Policy](#)
- [Complaint Management Procedure for Students and Members of the Public](#)
- [Special Consideration Policy](#)

Students seeking more policy resources can visit [Student Policies \(https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/policies\)](https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/policies). It is your one-stop-shop for the key policies you need to know about throughout your undergraduate student journey.

To find other policies relating to Teaching and Learning, visit [Policy Central \(https://policies.mq.edu.au\)](https://policies.mq.edu.au) and use the [search tool](#).

Student Code of Conduct

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct: <https://students.mq.edu.au/admin/other-resources/student-conduct>

Results

Results published on platform other than [eStudent](#), (eg. iLearn, Coursera etc.) 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 or if you are a Global MBA student contact globalmba.support@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) provides academic writing resources and study strategies to help you improve your marks and take control of your study.

- [Getting help with your assignment](#)
- [Workshops](#)
- [StudyWise](#)
- [Academic Integrity Module](#)

The Library provides online and face to face support to help you find and use relevant information resources.

- [Subject and Research Guides](#)
- [Ask a Librarian](#)

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

If you are a Global MBA student contact globalmba.support@mq.edu.au

IT Help

For help with University computer systems and technology, visit http://www.mq.edu.au/about_us/offices_and_units/information_technology/help/.

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