

Alex Madva

Introduction to Methods and Problems of Philosophical Thought

Are you awake or dreaming? Could you be having the same conscious experiences either way? For that matter, what does it mean to *be* conscious? Could computers be conscious? Could your consciousness and memories be transferred into another body? Would the recipient of those memories become *you*? Are you just a bundle of experiences, or is there some underlying soul or chunk of brain that makes you who you are? Do you have a free will? We will approach these questions through classic writings by René Descartes, Elisabeth of Bohemia, John Locke, and David Hume, as well as responses to their arguments from the 20th and 21st centuries.

Required Texts

René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*

David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*

- All other readings available in a Course Reader and on the course website

Weeks 1-2 Foundations of Knowledge, Skepticism, and Thinking Things

René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy* I-II

Weeks 3-4 Minds as Physical Things, and Minds from the First-Person Perspective

Descartes, *Meditations*, skim III-IV, read V-VI

Elisabeth of Bohemia, *Correspondence*

David Armstrong, “The Nature of Mind”

Thomas Nagel, “What is it Like to Be a Bat?”

Weeks 5-6 A.I., the Brain, and the Special Knowledge of Consciousness

Alan Turing, “Computing Machinery and Intelligence”

John Searle, “Minds, Brains and Programs”

Frank Jackson, “What Mary Didn’t Know”

Katalin Balog, “In Defense of the Phenomenal Concept Strategy”

Weeks 7-8 Personal Identity

John Locke, “Of Identity and Diversity”

Daniel Dennett, “Where Am I?”

David Hume, “Of Personal Identity”

Bertrand Williams, “The Self and the Future”

Laurie Paul, “What You Can’t Expect When You’re Expecting”

Week 9 Knowing the Outside World by Turning Inward: Innate Ideas and God

Anselm, *Proslogion*, Chapter 2

Descartes, *Meditations*, III

Weeks 10-11 Empiricism and Renewed Skepticism

Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, I-VII

Weeks 12-13 Freedom of the Will

Descartes, *Meditations*, IV

Hume, *Enquiry*, VIII

Harry Frankfurt, “Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person”

Peter Strawson, “Freedom and Resentment”

Angela Smith, “Responsibility for Attitudes: Activity and Passivity in Mental Life”

Nomy Arpaly, “When Cheap Will Just Won’t Do”