

Degree	Type	Year	Semester
4313410 Challenges of Contemporary Philosophy	OT	0	2

Contact

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Teachers

Thomas Sturm

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Use of languages

Principal working language: english (eng)

Prerequisites

No prerequisites.

Objectives and Contextualisation

This course is aimed at students who want to know present and central philosophical discussions about rationality and about the nature of mind.

The first part of the course (classes 1 to 5) is an introduction to theories of rationality. These theories should provide us with tools for a number of important tasks: We want to avoid irrationality, or aim at justifying our beliefs and decisions by standards of proper reasoning. We want to be clear about whether the reasons for our beliefs and actions are valid or reasonable.

But that raises fundamental questions at the interfaces between philosophy and science: What do we mean when we say that something, or someone, is rational? How should a normative theory of rationality be developed? What are its presuppositions, its potentials and limits? Also, what is rationality (if anything)? Can we hope to achieve a naturalistic, scientific understanding of it? And how could such a theory reflect the demand that the theory must also be normative? In the answers to such questions, different thinkers have introduced a bewildering variety of distinctions - such as theoretical versus practical, instrumental versus non-instrumental, individual versus collective, formal versus content-based, or optimizing versus "bounded" concepts of rationality. The course presents a survey of both classical and current debates. To do so, the course deals with two major topics: (I) The philosophy and psychology of epistemic rationality and irrationality; (II) the nature and normativity of rationality.

The second part (classes 6 to 10) is an introduction to the interdisciplinary program of the cognitive sciences and the present philosophical debate about the characterization of mind and/or consciousness. Finally, we will discuss the role of logic and philosophy in artificial intelligence. It is not a prerequisite of this module being familiar with computer science and artificial intelligence.

Skills

- Communicate and justify conclusions clearly and unambiguously to both specialised and non-specialised audiences.
- Continue the learning process, to a large extent autonomously
- Critically analyse and summarise information from a specialist article or monograph, or information of high quality available on internet.
- Define, design, plan and draw up an original unpublished research project on philosophy, following the established academic and scientific parameters.
- Establish and take into account the implications of scientific research and knowledge for advanced philosophy research.
- Reconstruct and critically analyse the positions of the principal current researchers into philosophy, in each of the central branches of the master's programme (science, art and politics), using the categories and vocabulary that characterise them.
- Seek out, select and manage information autonomously, both from structured sources (databases, bibliographies and specialist journals) and from internet.

Learning outcomes

1. Analyse philosophically the basic concepts, methods and theories in contemporary philosophy of the mind.
2. Apply knowledge of cognitive sciences to the analysis of contemporary issues regarding the mind.
3. Communicate and justify conclusions clearly and unambiguously to both specialised and non-specialised audiences.
4. Continue the learning process, to a large extent autonomously
5. Critically analyse and summarise information from a specialist article or monograph, or information of high quality available on internet.
6. Seek out, select and manage information autonomously, both from structured sources (databases, bibliographies and specialist journals) and from internet.
7. Understand the principal philosophical views on the mind in the 20th century.
8. Write a research paper presenting an original idea on the central arguments in contemporary philosophy of the mind rigorously, critically, creatively and autonomously.

Content

1. Introduction: Rationality and its pitfalls
2. Two early philosophical reactions to "Heuristics and biases"
3. The "rationality wars" in psychology
4. Philosophical reactions to the "rationality wars"
5. Naturalizing rationality?
6. The interdisciplinary program of the cognitive sciences
7. The problem of consciousness: behaviourism
8. The problem of consciousness: dualism, the mind-brain identity theory
- 9: Can machines think? The Turing test
- 10: Knowledge representation in artificial intelligence

Methodology

The classes will consist in the exposition of the different topics and discussion of the readings and exercises.

Activities

Title	Hours	ECTS	Learning outcomes
Type: Directed			
Class	40	1.6	1, 7
Type: Supervised			
Tutorial supervision	60	2.4	5, 3, 4
Type: Autonomous			
Reading, search of information	50	2	5, 6

Evaluation

A brief essay on one of the topics of the course. The student must write an original paper. The tutor of the student will be one of the teachers of the module. The topic of the paper must be agreed with the tutor.

Evaluation activities

Title	Weighting	Hours	ECTS	Learning outcomes
Paper	100%	0	0	5, 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 3, 4

Bibliography

1. Botterill, G. & Carruthers. P. (1999). The philosophy of psychology (pp. 105-130, "Reasoning and irrationality"). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tversky, A. & Kahneman, D. (1974). Judgment under uncertainty: Heuristics and biases. *Science*, 185, 1124-1131.
2. Cohen, L.J. (1981). Can human irrationality be experimentally demonstrated? *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 4, 317-331 (comments and responses, 331-59).

Stich, S. (1985). Could man be an irrational animal? Some notes on the epistemology of rationality. *Synthese*, 64, 115-135.
3. Gigerenzer, G. (1991). How to make cognitive illusions disappear: Beyond heuristics and biases. *European Review of Social Psychology*, 2, 83-115.

Kahneman, D. & Tversky, A. (1996). On the reality of cognitive illusions. *Psychological Review*, 103, 582-591.

Gigerenzer, G. (1996). On narrow norms and vague heuristics: A rebuttal to Kahneman and Tversky. *Psychological Review*, 103, 592-596.
4. Samuels, R., Stich, S. & Bishop, M., 2002. Ending the rationality wars: How to make disputes about human rationality disappear. In: R. Elio (ed.), *Common Sense, Reasoning and Rationality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 236-268.

5.

Chiappe, D. L., & Vervaeke, J. 1997. Fodor, Charniak, and the naturalization of rationality. *Theory & Psychology*, 7, 799-821.

Gigerenzer, G. & Sturm, T. 2012. How (far) can rationality be naturalized? *Synthese*, 187, 243-268.

6. Chalmers, D. The Matrix as Metaphysics. <http://consc.net/papers/matrix.html>

7. Ryle, G. El mito de Descartes. <http://www.filosoficas.unam.mx/~gmom/intro/ryle.pdf>

8. Nagel, Qué se siente al ser un murciélago

<http://www.icesi.edu.co/blogs/experimentosmentales/files/2010/03/Qué-se-siente-ser-un-murcielago-Nagel.pdf>

9. Turing, A. (1950) *Computing Machinery and Intelligence*, *Mind*, vol. 59 (traducció al castellà: A.M. Turing, ¿Puede pensar una máquina?, Cuadernos Teorema).

10. Russell, S., Norvig P. (2009) *Artificial Intelligence: A Modern Approach*, Prentice-Hall, primer capítol (traducció al castellà: Russell, S., Norvig P. (2009) *Inteligencia Artificial: un enfoque moderno*, Prentice-Hall, Pearson Educación).