“The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.”
— Aristotle

Professor:

Michael O'Rourke, South Kedzie 508, 517-884-7677, orourk51@msu.edu, http://www.msu.edu/~orourk51/

Office hours: 10:00-11:00 Tuesday and Thursday, or by appointment

Room:

119A Berkey Hall

Texts:

*Shared Agency: A Planning Theory of Acting Together*, by Michael Bratman, OUP

These books should be on sale at the MSU Bookstore. There will be recommended readings that I will post as pdfs on my website from time to time. The syllabus, the handouts, my lecture notes, and pointers to relevant philosophy sites will be available on this website at http://www.msu.edu/~orourk51/. I will not be using Angel or D2L in this class; if you wish to know your grade, please email me and I am happy to let you know how things stand. If you miss class, you will need to obtain a copy of the lecture notes and the handouts you missed off the website.

Something about the Course:

Philosophy of mind is a tree with many branches, but its trunk is the mind/body problem—all the interesting problems in philosophy of mind go back to that problem. What is the mind? This is a difficult question to answer, in no small part due to the fact that it’s not at all clear what the question is. What are we supposed to identify as the referent of the term, ‘mind’? Should it be something that can be identified objectively, or should we take seriously the subjective reports of introspection? Surely our intuitions about the mind are grounded in introspection, but theory and intuition do not always meet. Should we attend primarily to the causal role the mind plays in the processing of
information and the production of behavior—i.e., the mind as the engine of thought—or should we also worry about how all this feels? That is, should we worry about consciousness? Surely the feeling should enter into the account one gives; indeed, it is this that draws our attention to the difference between the mind and the body in the first place. The analogue question we might ask about the body seems somehow more tractable, but is it really? Note that if we lack an understanding of what the mind involves, and in particular, whether it is at all material in constitution, we also lack the complementary understanding of what the body involves. So long as the mind/body problem remains puzzling, we will remain uncertain about who and what we are.

Philosophy of mind has been dominated over the centuries by metaphysical concerns about ontology—what is the nature of the mind?—and consciousness—what is the nature of our feelings? But there are other topics of interest as well. For example, it makes sense to talk about the contents of mind, i.e., about beliefs, desires, and intentions, to name three. These figure into our explanations of action, and into our accounts of free will. But what reason have we to believe that mental states such as these contribute to the causal economy of perception and action? If neurons are doing the work, where are the beliefs? Together, these issues point to a more fundamental question that straddles the fence between the philosophy of mind and metaphysics, viz., how does the mind relate to the self? Perhaps the most motivating philosophical question concerns the nature of the self—What am I? Clearly, any answer to this question requires an appreciation for the nature and status of the mind.

Once we have explored the range of issues that constitute the philosophy of mind, we will turn our attention to a specific issue, viz., what is the nature of collective activity, or shared agency, and how does it relate to the contributing agents? It seems unlikely that mutual action—e.g., a duet on a piano, a dance, or a conversation—can be reduced without loss to the actions of individuals. (If you have been around children, you are likely to appreciate that there is a difference between playing together and parallel play.) But clearly the mentality that underwrites individual action is involved in underwriting collective action. How does this work? What is different about the activity of a collective? How is it that minds function in collaborating agents to knit individuals together into a group that is more than the sum of its individual members?

Our main target in this class will be the mind/body problem and related issues. We will begin by developing a broad understanding of the problem and candidate solutions. We will proceed by focusing on materialism and consciousness, as developed in the Heil book. This book also supplies a tendentious introduction to the related issues, connecting them up with the topic of the self. After reading Heil, we will turn from breadth to depth and take up the topic of collective intentionality. We will work through the Bratman volume and a few essays posted to my website. Together, Bratman and these essays will combine philosophical discussions of intentionality with reports of relevantly related empirical research. By working through these things, we will come to have an understanding of cutting edge views about the nature of intentionality, mutuality, and collective action.
Learning Goals:

As a Michigan State student, you are part of an educational institution that has certain, well-defined learning goals and objectives. You have a right to expect that these goals and objectives will guide your instructors as they design their courses. Just as a reminder, here are the Michigan State University learning goals and outcomes (from http://undergrad.msu.edu/learning):

**Analytical Thinking (AT)**
The MSU graduate uses ways of knowing from mathematics, natural sciences, social sciences, humanities, and arts to access information and critically analyzes complex material in order to evaluate evidence, construct reasoned arguments, and communicate inferences and conclusions.

- Acquires, analyzes, and evaluates information from multiple sources
- Synthesizes and applies the information within and across disciplines
- Identifies and applies, as appropriate, quantitative methods for defining and responding to problems
- Identifies the credibility, use, and misuse of scientific, humanistic and artistic methods

**Cultural Understanding (CU)**
The MSU graduate comprehends global and cultural diversity within historical, artistic, and societal contexts.

- Reflects on experiences with diversity to demonstrate knowledge and sensitivity
- Demonstrates awareness of how diversity emerges within and across cultures

**Effective Citizenship (ECit)**
The MSU graduate participates as a member of local, national, and global communities and has the capacity to lead in an increasingly interdependent world.

- Understands the structures of local, national, and global governance systems and acts effectively within those structures in both individual and collaborative ways
- Applies knowledge and abilities to solve societal problems in ethical ways

**Effective Communication (ECom)**
The MSU graduate uses a variety of media to communicate effectively with diverse audiences.
• Identifies how contexts affect communication strategies and practices
• Engages in effective communication practices in a variety of situations and with a variety of media

**Integrated Reasoning (IR)**
The MSU graduate integrates discipline-based knowledge to make informed decisions that reflect humane social, ethical, and aesthetic values.

• Critically applies liberal arts knowledge in disciplinary contexts and disciplinary knowledge in liberal arts contexts
• Uses a variety of inquiry strategies incorporating multiple views to make value judgments, solve problems, answer questions, and generate new understandings

This course is related most closely with the first, fourth, and fifth of these goals and outcomes, although you could look at the emphasis on shared agency as relevant to an understanding of the second and third goals as well.

I also have several specific, course-related goals:

• *Wonder about the nature of mind and mentality.* The mind and the body are intimately related, but what is the nature of this relationship? Are the mind and the body distinct things, or is the mind a part of the body—say, identical with the brain? How does mentality work? How does it relate to things that matter to us, such as free will and the self? Through the first eight weeks, we will consider answers to these questions developed and defended by John Heil, and in the process piece together a framework for making sense out of a wide variety of issues that relate to mentality. By semester’s end, these concepts should be familiar to you, and you should be able to think in systematic ways about them.

• *Know a little bit about the relationship between cognitive science and the philosophy of mind.* These are different—cognitive science is an empirical science, while philosophy is a conceptual science. Their methods are different even while their focus is similar. We will take a look at a few readings that present this difference, and we will have occasion to discuss it in class.

• *Do work at the cutting edge of philosophy of mind.* The Bratman book is brand new, and it presents a challenging set of arguments concerning the relationship between social agents. Through our study of this book, we will have a chance to see how our minds function in a broader context, and will also have an opportunity to interrogate our Cartesian assumptions about the centrality of the ego. (Consider this example: can conversation, or communication more generally, be reduced to the actions of individuals, or is there something essentially and ineliminably social about it?)
• *Develop critical reading, listening, and writing skills.* Good philosophers are charitable readers and listeners, and they are also cogent writers. Philosophical writing is difficult, but clear thinking and clear writing go hand in hand. You will be given the opportunity to exercise these skills in this class.

• *Begin developing sustainable views of your own about the conceptual intricacies of mind and mentality.* To this end, I have sacrificed breadth in favor of depth so as to give you the opportunity to engage in a sophisticated way with current research trends in the theory of intentionality. We will carefully work through two texts that explore the issues mentioned above, along with articles that supplement these works, and in so doing we will develop our own intuitions about these matters. Philosophy isn’t about memorizing the positions of others or about mastering a vernacular—it’s about intellectual growth.

**Lectures:**

We’ll spend the first half of the semester working our way through the Heil book, supplemented by additional readings that I post on the website. We will conclude our semester by focusing on shared agency, supported by the Bratman book and related readings.

Beginning with the third week, my lectures will occupy the Tuesday sessions. Thursday will be focused primarily on presentations and discussion. The Thursday session will begin with whatever lecture bits are leftover from Tuesday and then a 10 to 15 minute presentation by a student (or students) on some topic related to the assigned reading for the week, followed by discussion. This presentation requirement is described below. The lectures will be informal and you are encouraged to interrupt me with questions, challenges, jokes, etc.

**Requirements:**

**Class Participation.** You will not be required to contribute to the discussions, but you will be expected to prepare by doing the readings and attending class, remaining attentive and engaged while there. I will take attendance daily. You will be allowed two unexcused absences, and every unexcused absence after that will result in the loss of class participation percentage points (see below). Furthermore, you will be expected to turn your assignments in regularly and on time. The topics we will consider are complex and challenging—if we hope to acquire understanding of them, we must work together.

**Reading Responses.** I will ask you to respond to 4 or 5 short answer questions on the readings each week. These will typically be due on Tuesday at the beginning of class. The first one, though, is due on Thursday, September 11. I will post these as Word files to the Handouts page of my website, and I will also distribute them via the course email list.

**Papers.** I am convinced that the best way to learn philosophy is to write, so I will
have you write quite a bit in this class. The most substantial piece of writing will be a research paper on a topic in the philosophy of mind. You will be responsible for selecting the topic. The paper should be no more than 3000 words, inclusive of notes and references. It will be a research paper, and I will require you to use at least five recent sources (i.e., within the last two years). This will mean that you should spend time exploring current discussions of your topic. You will submit two drafts of this essay to me for evaluation. The first draft must be submitted by email to me as a Word attachment by class time on November 4 and the final draft is due as a Word attachment by 5 pm on Thursday, December 11. **IMPORTANT:** the first paper you submit should not be your first and roughest draft. I would encourage you to think "paper topic" from the get go in this class. I am happy to look at and comment on rough notes, outlines, or early drafts prior to November 4. Late research papers will be docked a letter grade for each class period they are late, unless you contact me on or before November 3 and give me a compelling reason for your late submission.

In addition to the research paper, you will produce four reading essays over the course of the semester. These essays will be two pages in length and they will concern some argument or issue in the assigned reading for the two-week period since the previous essay. I will give you topic ideas for the first two essays, but then you will need to select the subject of each essay. (An important part of your philosophical development is learning how to get puzzled by what you read.) You should devote the first half of the essay to reconstruction of the argument or issue you focus on and the second half to your comment. This comment can be critical in nature, but it need not be. For example, if you focus on an argument that you find compelling, you could devote the comment to consideration of the argument’s implications. The first of these is due in class on Thursday, September 25. I will not accept late reading essays, where “late” means submitted after class has started on the day the assignment is due. If you know you will have a conflict, you will need to speak with me in advance and get the paper to me before class. These will be submitted to me electronically as Word attachments.

The first written assignment is due by 5 pm on Friday, September 6. You will need to compose an e-mail message on the account you use most often and send it to me at orourk51@msu.edu. Please put the course number in the subject line. In this message, I want you to tell me how much philosophy you’ve studied and then explain to me why you took this class and what your expectations are for it. Also, I would like a paragraph in which you give me a definition of ‘mind’. This is worth 20 points that will be folded into your reading essay total. I will reply to each message I receive.

There will also be some in-class writing that will not be graded. This writing will be done in advance of some discussions as well as after some discussions. You learn philosophy by thinking about it, and you learn to think about it through writing.

**Presentation.** You will be responsible for kicking off discussion of one of the topics this semester. This presentation should be at least 10 minutes in length and no more than 15. You may select any aspect of the assigned reading as your focus, and you can approach that focus from any angle (e.g., analytical, critical, etc.). You will need to write these presentations out (they should be 4 to 5 pages in length) and meet with me no later than the class day before you are scheduled to give your presentation. **If you do not contact me before the presentation with drafts of your work, I will deduct a letter grade**
from the final evaluation. When you arrive for class on the day of your scheduled presentation, you will need to submit a draft of the presentation to me and a handout to the class; you will have five days after your presentation to submit the final draft, which you should do as a Word attachment in an email to me. The grade you receive for your presentation will be based primarily on the written piece you present, although I will also evaluate the effectiveness of the presentation itself and your ability to direct the discussion that you kick up. (Together, the quality of the presentation and the facilitated discussion count as much as the essay.) A handout that describes my expectations for these will be available on the website. Please begin thinking about what you would like to present; I will circulate a sign-up sheet on September 2 and presentations could begin as soon as Thursday, September 11. I encourage you to pair up for your presentations.

Grading:

Class participation will be determined on the basis of a 100-point scale, with 80 points associated with attendance and 20 with the quality (not the quantity) of your participation. Every unexcused absence after the second will result in 8 point reduction of the attendance part of this grade, so 12 unexcused absences means you will get a 0 for that part of the grade. The quality points will be allocated based on my assessment, which I am happy to share with you.

The reading responses will be evaluated using a ✓/- system, with “✓” indicating adequacy and “-” inadequacy. I will read these with a view to making sure that you have done the reading. If you do the readings and prepare thoughtful responses to the reading response questions, you will receive full credit on this part of the course. Every “-” received will result in the loss of 1/12 of this part of the grade.

Reading essays, presentation write-ups, and the long essay (each part) will be graded on a 100-point scale.

Each of these assignment categories will be converted to a 100-point scale and then multiplied by a factor corresponding to the percentage of the final grade. (See below.) Those earning between 90% and 100% overall will earn a 4.0 for the course, 85% and 89% a 3.5, 80% and 84% a 3.0, 75% and 79% a 2.5, 70% and 74% a 2.0, 65% and 69% a 1.5, 60% and 64% a 1.0 and 59% and below a 0.0.

Percentages of the final grade associated with each assignment category:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Paper</td>
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<td>First Draft</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Draft</td>
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<td>Reading Essays</td>
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<td>Reading Responses</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
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<td>Class Participation</td>
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Policies:

### Attendance

Attendance is required in this class. Excused absences are those excused by the university for official activities, those excused by me in advance, or those excused subsequently for documented reasons (e.g., health problem, family emergency). When you attend class, please be respectful of the others in the room—turn all sounds off on your cell phones, refrain from reading the newspaper, etc.

### Academic Honesty

Article 2.III.B.2 of the Academic Freedom Report states, "The student shares with the faculty the responsibility for maintaining the integrity of scholarship, grades, and professional standards." In addition, the Department of Philosophy adheres to the policies on academic honesty as specified in General Student Regulations 1.0, Protection of Scholarship and Grades; the all-University Policy on Integrity of Scholarship and Grades; and Ordinance 17.00, Examinations. (See Spartan Life: Student Handbook and Resource Guide or the MSU Web site: www.msu.edu.) You are expected to complete all course assignments without assistance from any source that I have not authorized. You are expected to develop original work for this course; therefore, you may not submit course work you completed for another course to satisfy the requirements for this course, and you may not pass off the work of others as your own (i.e., plagiarize). Also, you are not authorized to use the http://www.allmsu.com Web site to complete any course work in Philosophy 130. Students who violate MSU academic integrity rules may receive a penalty grade, including a failing grade on the assignment or in the course. If you are unsure about the appropriateness of your course work, please contact me. (See also https://www.msu.edu/unit/ombud/academic-integrity/student-faq.html.)

### Deadlines

All assignments must be handed in as you arrive in class on the day they are due. I do not accept late work unless class was missed for a documented emergency that arose without time for you to submit your work in advance. If you know that you will miss a class session prior to that session, you will need to submit your assignment in advance.

### Incompletes

The MSU policy for incompletes is as follows:

The I-Incomplete may be given only when: the student (a) has completed at least 6/7 of the term of instruction, but is unable to complete the class work and/or take the final examination because of
illness or other compelling reason; and (b) has done satisfactory work in the course; and (c) in the instructor’s judgment can complete the required work without repeating the course.

I do not give out incompletes unless the “compelling reason” mentioned above is documented, and you must discuss this with me in advance of finals week. The only exception is

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities *(from the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities (RCPD))*

Michigan State University is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all programs, services, and activities. Requests for accommodations by persons with disabilities may be made by contacting the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities at 517-884-RCPD or on the web at [http://rcpd.msu.edu](http://rcpd.msu.edu). It is your responsibility to promptly register with RCPD because some arrangements must be done well in advance (e.g. alternative test taking place or time). Once your eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, you will be issued a verified individual services accommodation (“VISA”) form. Please present this form to me at the start of the term and/or two weeks prior to the accommodation date (e.g., paper due date). Requests received after this date will be honored whenever possible.

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
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<tr>
<td>8/28</td>
<td>Introduction to the Philosophy of Mind</td>
<td>Syllabus</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/2</td>
<td>Cartesian</td>
<td>Descartes, <em>Meditations on First Philosophy</em></td>
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<td>Heil, Chs. 1-3</td>
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<td>9/9</td>
<td>Materialism</td>
<td>Heil, Chs. 4-5</td>
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<td>9/16</td>
<td>Functionalism</td>
<td>Heil, Chs. 6-7</td>
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<td>9/23</td>
<td>Skepticism about the Mind</td>
<td>Heil, Chs. 8-9</td>
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<td>9/30</td>
<td>Consciousness</td>
<td>Heil, Ch. 10</td>
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<td>10/7</td>
<td>Non-Reductive Physicalism</td>
<td>Heil, Ch. 11</td>
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<td>10/14</td>
<td>Metaphysics and Mind</td>
<td>Heil, Ch. 12</td>
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<td>10/21</td>
<td>The Mind’s Place in Nature</td>
<td>Heil, Ch. 13</td>
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<td>10/28</td>
<td>Sociality and Planning Agency</td>
<td>Bratman, Ch. 1</td>
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<td>11/4</td>
<td>No class</td>
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<td>11/11</td>
<td>Building Blocks, Parts 1 and 2</td>
<td>Bratman, Chs. 2-3</td>
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<td>11/18</td>
<td>Modest Sociality and Mutual Obligation</td>
<td>Bratman, Chs. 4-5</td>
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<td>11/25</td>
<td>Group Agents without Group Subjects</td>
<td>Bratman, Ch. 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>12/2</td>
<td>Shared Deliberation, Common Ground</td>
<td>Bratman, Ch. 7</td>
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