

## Phil 455/555: Philosophy of Mind

Have you ever heard the expression, “It’s mind over matter”? Is it meant to imply that the mind is not a material thing? Descartes famously argued that matter and mind are distinct substances—the mind being neither material nor spatial. But surely your mind, through thinking, causes your body to do things, like eat food because you desire it, avoid dark alleys because you’re afraid, or shake someone’s hand because you believe that it will seal the agreement. How could a *nonmaterial* thing cause a bodily entity to do anything at all? This sort of question will launch us into an exploration of the mind—what it is (maybe it just *is* the brain, but be warned, solutions to genuine philosophical problems don’t come that easy!), what kinds of states it has and events it undergoes, how it relates to (the rest of) one’s body and to other material bodies, whether a computer could have or be one, and whether consciousness can be understood in material terms.

It's an exciting time to be thinking about mind. Since Alan Turing proposed his test for whether a machine is intelligent in 1950, no computer had even come *close* to passing it *until now*. Does that mean that LLM's like ChaptGPT are intelligent? Well, that's a more difficult question—one that is at least as difficult to pose satisfactorily as it is to answer. You'll use LLM's to ask such questions and write a paper for you! Alongside investigations of artificial intelligence, philosophers and scientists are intensely interested in consciousness. Much of our reading in the course treats intelligence and consciousness as separate issues, but the question remains whether intelligence is possible without consciousness. That leaves (at least) three questions: What is intelligence? What is consciousness? How are they (whatever they are) related?

Readings: Furnished as .pdf's.

Grades for Phil 455 based on three papers (two short (4-6pp.) and one medium (6-8pp.)), discussion, and several short quizzes. Students enrolled in Phil 555 will be expected to write a more substantial final paper (9-12pp.), including further relevant readings.