PHI6326- Social Minds

Advanced Graduate Seminar in Philosophy of Mind

University of Florida

Fall 2025

Class Meeting Times and Location

Wednesdays, 3-6pm FLO 200

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Office hours: Mondays 10:40am-12:40pm FLO 115c, and by appointment

Social Minds; living in a world of individuals and agents

Course Description:
What kinds of cognitive capacities must a mind possess in order to engage socially with others? In this interdisciplinary course, we will explore the social lives of nonhuman animals through the lenses of philosophy, psychology, and cognitive science. From elephants consoling their companions to chimpanzees deceiving their rivals, the animal kingdom offers a rich variety of social behavior—raising profound questions about the kinds of minds that make such interactions possible.

We will investigate the building blocks of social cognition, including theory of mind, empathy, cooperation, communication, group coordination, and social learning. Drawing on case studies from comparative psychology, ethology, and cognitive neuroscience, we ask: Which animals recognize others as unique individuals who persist over time? Which animals see others creatures as intentional agents? What role does emotion play in animal societies? Can nonhuman animals be self-aware as well as socially-aware? And how do researchers distinguish between simple behavioral rules and genuinely mind-based interaction?

In addition to examining empirical studies, we consider philosophical debates about theory of mind, communication, and self-consciousness in social animals. Students will gain a clearer understanding of what it means for an animal to have a *social mind*, and how such minds illuminate the broader nature of cognition and personhood.

I anticipate that you will:

1) gain an understanding of selective but central concepts that are fundamental in determining what constitutes a *social mind,* including (but not limited to) *thought, consciousness, theory of mind*, and *selfhood;*

2) develop expertise in a specific domain of interest related to philosophy of mind;

3) explore new theoretical and/or research ideas;

4) improve your scholarly writing skills;

5) gain experience revising manuscripts and "submitting" them.

Schedule of Topics:

Week	Date	
1	8/21 & 8/22	No classes
2	8/25 to 29	What are "Social Affordances"? And "How to Study Animal Minds"
3	9/1 to 5	Animal Social Cognition
4	9/8 to 12	Theory of Mind in non-human animals
5	9/15 to 19	Animal Consciousness Andrews Ch 3: Consciousness (1st ed)
6	9/22 to 26	Origins of Social Cognition
7	9/29 to 10/3	Norms in non-human animal groups
8	10/6 to 10	Plural Subject Theory
9	13 to 17	PST and Atomic Individualism
10	10/20 to 24	Social Entities
11	27 to 31	evolutionarily primitive social entities
12	11/3 to 7	Joint-Intentionality, pre-workshop prep
13	11/10 to 14	Joint intentionality, post-workshop discussion
14	11/17 to 21	Animal Selves and self-consciousness
15	11/24 to 28	TG break
16	12/1 to 3	WIP presentations

Graded Requirements:

Full length Term Paper (75%): Your full-length term paper will be due on *** **at 11:59pm**. It is worth **% of your final grade. Length will be approx. **2700-3200 words**. This is roughly the length of a paper for a conference presentation. It should be submitted on Canvas via TurnItIn.

Term Paper Proposal (5%): A proposal for your term paper is due on *** **at 11:59pm** and will be worth *% of your final grade (You will start working on your paper proposal long before **th!). We will discuss how to complete this assignment as the term progresses.

Participation Via Weekly Perusall Annotations and Replies- (10%): Each week, every student will contribute at least one annotation to our course reading for that week. Each student will also contribute one reply to a classmate's annotation each week. We will discuss how to make substantial contributions through your Perusall annotations during our first course meeting.

Perusall annotation contributions will consist of the following:

- 1 original Comment of your own (200 word limit)
- 1 Reply to a comment posted by a classmate (150 word limit)
  - **Original comments are due at 11:59 pm on Sunday** each week.
  - **Replies are due by 11:59pm on the following Monday**.

You should view these Comments and Replies as a chance to engage with the material and show that you are putting effort into understanding and grappling with the course content- this may involve asking a question(s), raising an idea(s), or positing a challenge to the view defended in the assigned reading.

The aim of these posts is to provide a critical analysis of a particular aspect of the reading that the class may be able to discuss as a group in the following seminar meeting. I will read these in advance of class and chose several that seem likely to promote fruitful discussion. These posts receive a completion grade and are an essential part of your participation in this course.

Work In Progress Presentation (10%): During the last two weeks of class each student who is writing a term paper for the course will give a work-in-progress presentation on their term paper topic. Presentations will be approximately 20 minutes long and will be followed by a 20min Q&A session with the class. This exercise is designed to help you improve your term paper with feedback from your classmates.

Late written work:

The penalty for late work is 1/3 of a letter grade deducted immediately at the deadline, and again at each 24-hour mark beyond the deadline until the work is submitted (including weekend days).

No assignments will be accepted which are more than one week late. Exceptions to this require instructor approval.

Grading Scale	
A	94-100%
A-	90-93
B+	87-89
B	84-86
B-	80-83
C+	77-79
C	74-76
C-	70-73
D+	67-69
D	64-66
D-	60-63
E	0-59%

Readings and Suggested Texts:

All required readings will be posted under "Files" on our Canvas website. There will be links to the readings in the syllabus Schedule of Readings and Discussion Content. Read and post on each text BEFORE that text is discussed in our class meeting.

Classroom conduct:

Philosophy is sometimes mistakenly understood to be a combative exercise. That style does not impress me at all. I encourage you to direct your first effort toward trying to understand and develop both the contributions of the authors we read and the contributions of others in the class. Where those are limited, of course, good philosophy also happens when you (respectfully) disagree, note tensions, make distinctions, reshape the question, and so on. Students who repeatedly act aggressively, in ways which attempt to incite unnecessary conflict or to dominate the discussion and/or other people, will receive a reduction in their Discussion grade.

Working with classmates:

You are encouraged to talk to one another outside of class about philosophy and about this course as much as possible. This includes discussion of paper topics, and it includes reading drafts of one another's work. If you do work together, please be mindful of the following:

1. Your final product must be your own original work, and not a repetition of someone else's ideas or essay.

2. Each essay must be a piece of written thinking in itself. Sometimes conversation in advance of writing can make you feel like the conclusions of that conversation are now established, such that you can now talk about them by stating them (or assuming, or implying). But your essays need to "show your work"—if the argument is not explicitly on the page, you haven't made the argument. We need to see the important pieces of reasoning.
3. You must be willing to endorse what ends up in your paper. Beware of letting others persuade you to go in the wrong direction. You are ultimately responsible for both the understandings and misunderstandings in the papers you turn in.

Campus Resources for UF Students

An extensive list of campus resources- technical, academic, medical, and mental- can be found here and on the "Campus Resources" page

Academic Honesty and Plagiarism
Links to an external site.

Most instances of academic dishonesty can be avoided by thoroughly citing the resources you have used to help you understand the topic on which you're writing. If you have read something that helped you understand the material, cite it! Failure to cite sources is the most common (and easily avoidable) academic offense.

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge, which states:

"We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment."

The Honor Code (https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/)

Links to an external site. specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor.

Plagiarism on any assignment will automatically result in a grade of "E" for the course. Plagiarism is defined in the University of Florida's Student Honor Code as follows:

"A student shall not represent as the student's own work all or any portion of the work of another. Plagiarism includes (but is not limited to): a. Quoting oral or written materials, whether published or unpublished, without proper attribution. b. Submitting a document or assignment which in whole or in part is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment not authored by the student."

Students found guilty of academic misconduct will be prosecuted in accordance with the procedures specified in the UF honesty policy.

Evaluations

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/

Links to an external site.. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/ Links to an external site.. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/

Links to an external site..

Attendance, Illness, Religious Holidays, and Twelve Day Rule

In order to have the fullest understanding of the material you will need to be present for each class meeting and take notes on the class discussion. Given that we are all subject to the whims of our internet connection, there will be no penalty for missing a class, but to get the most out of this course you will want to be part of each of our class meetings.

Official requirements for class attendance, religious holidays, and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at: https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx

Links to an external site..

E-mail guidelines:

(1) If you need some practical information about the course you should look at most recently updated syllabus or on the website. E-mails requesting information which is available on the most recently updated syllabus or on the website will not be answered.

(2) If you want to discuss a substantive philosophical question you should bring it up in seminar or office hours. E-mails asking substantive philosophical questions cannot be answered in full-

philosophy just doesn't work that way! (You will likely receive a note suggesting that you visit one of our office hours or arrange an appointment to chat.)

If, after reading (1) & (2) you still think you should e-mail me, you are welcome to do so at amber.ross@ufl.edu. I will try to answer e-mail within the week. You must use your 'ufl' address.

Please note: I may not read email between 5pm and 9am.

How to do well in this course:

1. Be sure to read the assigned material before our class meeting. This will help to ensure that our class time is quality time.
2. After class, re-read the material for the session, paying special attention to the questions that you had before. Hopefully the material will make much more sense to you now.
3. Bring specific questions with you to class. Even if there are aspects of the readings or study questions you didn't fully grasp, the fact that you tried should help you to narrow down what it is that you don't get.
4. See us in office hours, if there are still questions you are unclear about. That's what office hours are for. Don't be shy.
5. Manage your time well. The due date is not the DO date! Even graduate students can make the mistake of waiting until a few days before papers are due to start writing. That is *bad* time management. The same number of hours devoted to the material BEFORE class can lead to a much more efficient use of your time, better understanding, and higher grades.

On Reading Philosophy Texts:

You will be expected to have done the assigned reading before you come to class to be able to follow the lecture and participate in tutorial discussion. Learning philosophy is as much learning a style of thinking and reasoning as it is learning certain contents. Therefore it is important that you try to participate actively and learn to engage with the readings critically.

You should budget enough time for the reading to be able to read each piece at least three times. Don't expect to be able to 'breeze through' the texts and you can avoid a lot of frustration. For all the readings you should have a pen and paper ready to take notes as you read. Philosophical writing is concerned with advancing and defending arguments. Your task will be to try to reconstruct the arguments and to critically evaluate them.

The first reading of the text should be fairly quick. Your goal here should be to get a first, rough sense of the general argument the author is advancing and the rough structure of the text. What is his or her main thesis? (write this down!) Where in the text is s/he arguing for it? Where does

s/he address objections? Where does he discuss qualifications? Where does s/he motivate the argument? Don't worry, if during the first reading you don't yet understand how precisely the author is arguing for a thesis.

The second reading should be devoted to giving a reconstruction of the argument that is as sympathetic as possible. Now you should spend a lot of time on trying to understand how the author supports the main thesis, and how s/he might address potential objections. Here it is usually useful to try to jot down the following: What are the premises of the argument? How are the premises themselves supported? For example the author might appeal to shared intuitions or might claim that the premises are self-evident. What are the steps which are meant to get the author from the premises to the conclusion? (Here worlds like 'because' and 'therefore' can provide a clue.) You might think of yourself as engaging in a dialogue with the text here. Ask critical questions of the text, such as "You say that all simple ideas are copies of impressions. Why should I be compelled to accept this?" Then search the text for answers. At this stage your aim should not yet be to try to discover flaws or problems in the argument. Aim to make the argument as strong as possible.

Finally it is time to be critical. During a third reading you ought to try to see if you can uncover weaknesses in the arguments. If someone would want to disagree with a conclusion, there are two general ways in which one might attack the author's arguments. One, you can disagree with one or more of the premises. That is you might accept that *if* we grant the premises, *then* the conclusion follows, but you might disagree with one or more of the premises. (But then you should ask yourself how you would respond to the attempt to motivate the premises.) Or, two, you might disagree with one or more of the steps in the argument. That is, you might be willing to accept the premises, but you might deny that this commits you to the conclusion as well. If you have an objection of the latter kind you should try to explain why it is possible to accept the author's premises and yet deny his or her conclusions. (Of course you also might have objections of both kinds.)

A careful reading of a difficult text takes time. Learn to read patiently and slowly, and before you get frustrated, remember that even professional philosophers struggle with some of the texts you are reading. One of the most wonderful aspects of reading philosophy is that it allows you to engage in conversations with some of the deepest and most original thinkers. Enjoy the challenge!

Reading list: alphabetical by author

This list is partial and subject to change. Dates for discussion of specific readings will be announced in class and on Canvas.

Andrews, Kristin, 2005, "Chimpanzee Theory of Mind: Looking in All the Wrong Places?", *Mind and Language*, 20(5): 521–536. doi:10.1111/j.0268-1064.2005.00298.x

––––, 2024, "Human and Nonhuman Norms: A Dimensional Framework", *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences*, 379(1897): 20230026. doi:10.1098/rstb.2023.0026

Andrews, Kristin and Susana Monsó, 2021, "Animal Cognition", in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2021 edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2021/entries/cognition-animal/>.

Bratman, Michael E., 2020, "Tomasello on 'We' and the Sense of Obligation", *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 43: e62. doi:10.1017/S0140525X19002383

Bugnyar, Thomas, Stephan A. Reber, and Cameron Buckner, 2016, "Ravens Attribute Visual Access to Unseen Competitors", *Nature Communications*, 7: article 10506. doi:10.1038/ncomms10506

Burge, Tyler, 2018, "Do Infants and Nonhuman Animals Attribute Mental States?", *Psychological Review*, 125(3): 409–434. doi:10.1037/rev0000091

Call, Josep and Michael Tomasello, 2008, "Does the Chimpanzee Have a Theory of Mind? 30 Years Later", *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 12(5): 187–192. doi:10.1016/j.tics.2008.02.010

–––, 2020, "Chimpanzee Normativity: Evidence and Objections", *Biology & Philosophy*, 35(4): 45. doi:10.1007/s10539-020-09763-1

Fletcher, Logan and Peter Carruthers, 2013, "Behavior-Reading versus Mentalizing in Animals", in *Agency and Joint Attention*, Janet Metcalfe and Herbert S. Terrace (eds), New York: Oxford University Press, 82–99 (ch. 4). doi:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199988341.003.0005

Gilbert, Margaret, 2020, "Shared Intentionality, Joint Commitment, and Directed Obligation", *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 43: e71. doi:10.1017/S0140525X19002619

Hare, Brian, Josep Call, Bryan Agnetta, and Michael Tomasello, 2000, "Chimpanzees Know What Conspecifics Do and Do Not See", *Animal Behaviour*, 59(4): 771–785. doi:10.1006/anbe.1999.1377

Kano, Fumihiro, Christopher Krupenye, Satoshi Hirata, Masaki Tomonaga, and Josep Call, 2019, "Great Apes Use Self-Experience to Anticipate an Agent's Action in a False-Belief Test", *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 116(42): 20904–20909. doi:10.1073/pnas.1910095116

Krupenye, Christopher, Fumihiro Kano, Satoshi Hirata, Josep Call, and Michael Tomasello, 2016, "Great Apes Anticipate That Other Individuals Will Act According to False Beliefs", *Science*, 354(6308): 110–114. doi:10.1126/science.aaf8110

Monsó, Susana and Richard Moore, 2024, "Normative Expectations in Human and Nonhuman Animals", *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 19(1): 51–52. doi:10.1177/17456916231187401

Moore, Richard, 2013, "Social Learning and Teaching in Chimpanzees", *Biology & Philosophy*, 28(6): 879–901. doi:10.1007/s10539-013-9394-y

Premack, David and Guy Woodruff, 1978, "Does the Chimpanzee Have a Theory of Mind?", *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 1(4): 515–526. doi:10.1017/S0140525X00076512

Premack, David, 1988, "'Does the Chimpanzee Have a Theory of Mind' Revisited", in *Machiavellian Intelligence: Social Expertise and the Evolution of Intellect in Monkeys, Apes, and Humans*, Richard W. Byrne and Andrew Whiten (eds), Oxford: Clarendon Press, chapter 13, pp. 160–179.

Tomasello, Michael, Malinda Carpenter, Josep Call, Tanya Behne, and Henrike Moll, 2005, "Understanding and Sharing Intentions: The Origins of Cultural Cognition", *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 28(5): 675–691. doi:10.1017/S0140525X05000129