

Phil 3422 Philosophical Issues in Cognitive Science

Class Number 18212 Section TR11 Tues, Thurs 11:00 AM – 12:15 PM 4145 Boylan

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Cognitive Science is the interdisciplinary science of the human mind and cognition that attempts to provide a unified account of the nature of mind and draws insights from several fields: Philosophy, Psychology, Computer Science, Linguistics, Neuroscience, Behavioral Economics, Ethology, and Evolutionary Biology. The course doesn't require any prior familiarity with these disciplines, just a curiosity about how the mind works. We will investigate questions such as: What is human mind? Are computers the best model for understanding the mind? What is consciousness? How can cognitive science explain culture or religious beliefs? What can we know about mental lives of animals?

The course will focus on the historical development, foundational philosophical presuppositions, methodologies, and experimental results from a selection of core topics in Cognitive Science. The topics span learning, perception, language, decision-making, memory, emotion, morality, humor and happiness. Each time we visit a topic, we will ask: What theoretical issues are at stake? How are they being addressed? What are the key ideas? What are the basic phenomena, how were they discovered, and what counts as an explanation of them? The aim is to arrive at a comprehensive overview of the big ideas of cognitive science—the theoretical principles that constitute our current understanding of how our minds work.