

PHILOSOPHY 109
The Superhuman Mind: An Introduction to Philosophy of Mind

Instructors: Professor Berit Brogaard

Office Hours: Brogaard, 712 Ashe Building
Virtual by appointment.

Office Phone: 305-877-7353

Email: brogaardb@gmail.com

Texts:

Brogaard, B. & Marlow, K. *The Superhuman Mind*. Hudson Street Press, a Division of the Penguin Group/Random House, August 2015.

Short Course Description

Cases of people who became geniuses by accident, human echolocation, lucid dreaming, synthetic telepathy used to move objects with the mind, and more, will be used to shed light on basic concepts in philosophy, such as the concept of mind, the concept of intelligence and the concept of human agency and human capacity.

Long Course Description

This course is an introduction to cutting-edge neuroscience, basic concepts in philosophy of mind, and the ethical implications of unusual neurological abilities. As a study of people with special neurological talents, the course will look at cases of people who became geniuses by accident, human echolocation (deaf people who can detect sound), lucid dreaming, synthetic telepathy used to move objects with the mind, and more. The cases will be used to shed light on basic concepts in philosophy, such as the concept of mind, the concept of intelligence and the concept of human capacity. We will also look at the implications of these cases for current ethical debates. The course satisfies the Gen Ed Social/Behavioral, Science, Value and Writing requirements.

Course Objectives

At the conclusion of this course students will know how to

- Summarize the main ideas of historical and contemporary philosophical and psychological theories of human intelligence and acumen
- Analyze the fundamental differences among the notions of intelligence, IQ, genius, gifted individual, human ability, human capacity
- Apply these concepts in a resolution of current ethical debates, particularly those pertaining to intelligence and human agency.
- Identify, describe, criticize their own beliefs and biases and the sources of these beliefs and biases.
- Develop strategies to explore others' unique abilities and specialties
- Reflect on and describe various methods used to make people more intellectually and epistemically capable agents

Course Outline

Module 1: The Hidden Abilities in All of Us: Find out how brain injury and disease can unlock dormant talent in the ordinary brain.

Module 2: A Flexible Mind: Just how plastic is the brain? Much more plastic than you might think, even far into old age.

Module 3: How do we learn? What can we learn? Mnemonics are the key to learning and remembering facts. Find ways to develop your own.

Module 4: Smart Cookies: How to become a math genius.

Module 5: Draw Like a Child: Drawing well depends on turning of our conscious perception stream.

Module 6: Sleep Like a Baby: There is so much you can learn while you dream.

Module 7: Super-Perceivers: The tale of the five senses is a myth. We have up to 18 senses. Which senses are your strengths and weaknesses? How have people made up for the loss of a sense?

Module 8: Brain Tech: Can we artificially enhance our brain power? We take a look at technology and drugs that can help you utilize more of the brain's power.

Due Dates

Below please find the date that the modules open and the date the module is due.

	<u>Start(Available)</u>	<u>End (Final Due Date)</u>
Module 1	1/11/16	1/24/16
Module 2	1/25/16	2/7/16
Module 3	2/8/16	2/21/16
Module 4	2/22/16	3/6/16
Module 5	3/7/16	3/20/16
Module 6	3/21/16	4/3/16
Module 7	4/4/16	4/17/16
Module 8	4/18/16	5/1/16

Course Requirements

Every week there will be a short writing assignment and projects for you to complete. The writing assignments are worth a maximum of 26 percent total. Participation on the discussion board is worth a maximum of 50 percent. Quizzes are worth a total of 24 percent.

Short writing assignments, projects and forum participation will be graded on the following 0-100 point scale.

A 90-100 B 80-89 C 70-79 D 60-69 F 0-59

This grading scale was designed to fit the following interpretation of the various grades.

- A A solid performance that reveals no fundamental shortcomings either in understanding or ability to work with the material.
- B A few serious shortcomings (or perhaps a number of minor ones) but still clearly above a minimally acceptable performance.
- C A minimally acceptable performance, probably revealing a good number of serious shortcomings.
- D Unacceptable performance but with some evidence that something has been learned.

F Inexcusable.

Assignments and Evaluation

Writing assignments.....	26%
Discussion Board participation.....	50%
Quizzes.....	24%

Assignment Requirements

Facts: Four or more facts are required. Facts can be objective details or objective reasons for opinions

Quality of Writing: The quality of the writing should be college-level. College-level writing requires an active voice (possible avoidance of passive constructions), variation of vocabulary, no run-off sentences, division of text into paragraphs and lists into lists with bullet points and citation of sources. For the full list of requirements involved in college-level writing, see Strunk and White, *The Elements of Style*.

Organization: Letters must include dates, facts, address line and signature. Narrative non-fiction must include an introduction of scene and characters, four or more facts, a problem culmination and a solution. Regular non-fiction must include a brief introduction, facts and a brief conclusion. Lists must include facts. Quizzes must be in quiz format.

Formatting: The required minimum length of the assignment is 3,000 characters (roughly four substantial paragraphs for essays and letters, or 500 words). Font: Arial. Font Size: 11 Points: Margins: 1 inch.

Online Class Netiquette/behavior

- o **Be self-reflective** before you post an emotional response and reread what you have written to be sure it is positive. Think of your comments as printed in the newspaper. Your online comments will be seen, heard and remembered by others in the class.
- o **Use effective communication.**
 - o Avoid the use of all caps or multiple punctuation elements (!!!, ???, !?!, etc).
 - o Be polite, understate rather than overstate your point, and use positive language.
 - o If you are using acronyms, jargon or uncommon terms, be sure to explain

them so everyone can understand and participate in the discussion.

- o **Ask for clarification** to a point if you feel emotional from a classmate's post. It is likely that you misunderstood his/her point. This strategy will also help you step away from the intensity of the moment to allow for more reflection.
- o **Sign your name.** It is easier to build a classroom community when you know to whom you are responding.
- o **Foster community.** Share your great ideas and contribute to ongoing discussions. Consider each comment you make as one that is adding to, or detracting from, a positive learning environment for you and your classmates.
- o **Be constructive.** You can challenge ideas and the course content, but avoid becoming negative online. When you disagree politely you stimulate and encourage great discussion. You also maintain positive relationships with others with whom you may disagree on a certain point.
- o **Keep the conversation on topic** by responding to questions, adding thoughtful comments about the topics at hand. Online dialogue is like conversation. If there is a particular dialogue going on, please add to it, but if you have something new to say, please post it in another thread.
- o **Define your terms.** When using acronyms or terms that are particular to your field (or new to our course), please define them for others.

Miscellaneous Rules and Regulations

No unexcused absences from writing assignments, quizzes and projects will be tolerated. Make-up activities are unavailable without compelling and verifiable evidence of physical incapacity. Incompletes are issued only in the event that such circumstances interfere with the completion of the coursework. Any form of cheating, including plagiarism, will result in a failing grade for the course and referral for the appropriate University disciplinary action.