A. GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

This is a seminar course whose special theme for Winter 2003 is “The Individual in the Fragile Sciences”. The debate between individualists and externalists about the mind stems from the work of Hilary Putnam and Tyler Burge in the 1970s, and it has been central to the philosophy of mind since then. Individualists, such as Jerry Fodor, Ned Block, and Steve Stich, hold that mental or psychological states supervene on the intrinsic, physical properties of individuals. Externalists, such as Putnam and Burge, deny this.

This perhaps seemingly simple-sounding issue has implications for a range of topics in the field, including mental causation, the relationship between the cognitive and other sciences, how we conceptualize experience or phenomenology, and accounts of intentionality or mental content. We will discuss such topics, and move from them to consider individualistic views in the biological sciences. In particular, following a three-week introductory section, we will examine an externalist view of the mind over a four-week period or so, before turning to discuss genetics and development, organisms, and debates over the units or levels of selection in the philosophy of biology. See F below for more on the direction to and content of the course.

Please feel free to come and chat about any aspect of the course, either during my regular office hours or by appointment outside of them. I have voice-mail in my office, and am on e-mail regularly, though typically not over weekends. I am most likely to be in my office on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.

B. BACKGROUND FOR THE COURSE

The course has no specific course requirements other than those generally for 400/500-level courses in the department, and has been designed with this in mind. That having been said, be warned that some of the reading for the course is difficult, though perhaps not exceptionally so for the level of the courses.

Students who are taking the course but concerned about their background preparation for the course should come and talk to me as early as possible; such concerns are often misplaced, though I will also recommend some additional, introductory readings that may be
of use. [For those whose anxieties preclude approaching me, I recommend that you take a look at either George Graham's *The Philosophy of Mind* (Blackwell, 1991) or Kim Sterelny’s *The Representational Theory of Mind* (Blackwell, 1990), both written as fairly introductory texts.] The reading guide organized by topic in C below may also be of use here, though note that most of the readings listed there are for further readings on topics covered in the course.

C. COURSE MATERIALS

The core reading for the course will be a book manuscript of the instructor's, *The Individual in the Fragile Sciences I: Cognition* that is available from the Campus Bookstore. There will be a few other supplemental readings, and I would also like to cover at least some of the companion volume, *Biology*, in the second half of the course. But I will hold off assigning that for sure until we get into the course a little and I get some sense of your collective interests, background, and abilities. If we need to spend more time on the material from *Cognition*, or on supplementary readings, then we'll scale back on what we cover from *Biology*. And if we do that, then I may just assign independent, self-contained papers that correspond to chapters from the *Biology* manuscript, rather than the manuscript itself.

A book listed for the course in the departmental course guide, *Cartesian Psychology and Physical Minds: Individualism and the Sciences of the Mind* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), is no longer required reading. But since it is the precursor to the two books we will draw on in the course, some of you may find it of use or interest. I shall place the library copy on reserve.

For those who wish to pursue some of the topics that we will discuss, the briefly annotated reading guide in H below may be of interest and use. Students need not have completed this reading list prior to coming to the second class.

D. WORKLOAD AND COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The reading load for this semester is moderate-high in quantity and level: it is on average about 50 book pages per week and spread fairly evenly through the semester. You should expect to have to read most of the assigned readings carefully, and in most cases, more than once. If it turns out that this is too ambitious a reading load, we will scale back as necessary. The writing load for the course is moderate.

For undergraduates the assessment will be determined as follows:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Short assignment due in Week 3</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short paper due around Week 8</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Term paper due just after the end of classes</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class preparation and participation</td>
<td>30%</td>
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The last of these will be assigned in increments at roughly one-third and two-thirds through the course, and at the end of classes. Thus, antecedent to the last few weeks of class you will have 50% of your final grade in hand; at the end of classes, this moves to 60%. Undergraduates can also expect to be assessed by standards appropriate to their undergraduate standing.
The assessment scheme for **graduate students** will be as follows:

- Short assignment due in Week 3: 10%
- Short paper due around Week 8: 20%
- Term paper due just after the end of classes: 50%
- Class preparation and participation: 20%

The last of these will be assigned in increments at roughly halfway through the course and at the end of classes. Thus, after roughly Week 9, you will have 40% of your final grade determined, and antecedent to the final paper, that will rise to 50%. Graduate students can also expect to be assessed by standards appropriate to their graduate standing.

I will aim to make your progressive grades available to you as quickly as I can. I expect to turn assignments and papers back within a week with written comments. Unless undergraduates individually or collectively express an interest in having written comments on their final papers, these will be omitted; in my experience, they are wasted effort, since many undergraduates do not even pick up their term papers.

You are encouraged to start work (however tentatively) on the **term paper** shortly after paper topics are distributed in Week 8 or 9. I would be happy to discuss a draft of the term paper in advance of its deadline.

In general, **late papers** are not particularly welcome, and you should (i) talk to me in advance about a paper which will not be submitted by the due date, (ii) expect to be penalized for a late paper that does not have a written extension from me. The going rate for deductions for papers that are submitted late but not in accord with both (i) and (ii) is about 10% per day. Incomplete grades will not be given in this course, except in cases of documented family and medical emergencies. Please keep up with the work for the course as you go, and avoid massive disappointments at its conclusion.

## E. CLASSES

**Regular attendance of the class is required**, for much of the work will be done through class discussion; irregular attendance, in the extreme case, will be grounds for failing the course. If you find the class meetings boring, too easy, too difficult, or a waste of time, please let me know directly and early on in the course rather than by not turning up at all. Remember, if you find the class meetings particularly irksome, it is likely that others do, too, and I hope you find me approachable about changes to the content or style of the course.

I envisage splitting most class periods into two parts, the first shorter than the second. In the first part, I will provide a brief overview of some of the main issues from the week’s readings. This will not be a summary of the assigned readings, but will aim to set the broader context for them, and raise some questions for you to think about. After a short break, we will discuss the assigned readings for that week, questions and issues you raise both in and antecedent to the class, and other issues as they arise. At the end of each class I will give you some "**starter questions**" to think about for the following class, as well as assign the specific readings for that week.

For in-class discussion to be most effectively, I would encourage you to e-mail me questions and comments you have **before 10 am on the Monday of class**. These can range
from purely "I don't understand X" questions (for any X ... some subset of which I may be able to answer), through to detailed critiques, concerns about, and problems with the substance of the assigned readings. **This interaction constitutes an important part of your preparation for classes** and participation in the course more generally, and I will weigh it together with your in-class participation in determining the participation component to your grade final grade.

There will be no class presentations from students. Despite being the "method of choice" for upper-level or graduate seminars, in my view these seldom make for effective discussion in the class as a whole, and often do more harm than good for the person presenting. My emphasis will be on encouraging you to keep your participation at a steady level throughout the course, and on including you all in class-based discussion each week.

**F. A TENTATIVE SCHEDULE**

The following schedule should give you some idea of the direction to the course, and the questions some idea of the sorts of issues that we will cover. (By the way, I envisage you being actually able to answer these questions at the end of each of these sections of the course.)

In light of my comments in C above, take the "tentative" in "tentative schedule" seriously; we may scale back or otherwise adjust the course if we find that we need more time or background on the material I am planning to cover in the first half or so of the course.

**Introductory Issues (Weeks 1 - 3):**

What is individualism (or internalism) in psychology? What motivates individualism? What are the Putnam-Burge thought-experiments, and why think that they support externalism? How does individualism relate to physicalism about the mind? To functionalism? How might individualistic positions in the cognitive, biological, and social sciences be related to one another?


**The Externalist View of the Mind (Weeks 4 - 7):**

What role does the idea of a wide realization play in externalism? Why has cognitive science been individualistic? Are there plausible views of computation and representation that are not individualistic? What is the TESEE conception of consciousness, and how plausible is it? What is the relationship between intentionality and phenomenology?

**Readings: IFS I: chh.3-7; one chapter per week, except we'll do chh.6-7 together.**

**Individuals, Individualism, and Biology (Weeks 9-12)**

Is sub-organismic biology individualistic? Why or why not? What are the chief problems facing the tripartite view of organisms? What is the most plausible way to understand the group mind hypothesis? What does the myxoma case imply about the debate over the levels of selection? Why might one be a pluralist about individual and group selection?

**Readings: IFS II: chh.1-2 (together), and chh.5, 6-7, 8 in consecutive weeks.**
G. FURTHER READINGS BY TOPIC

Below is a selective guide to about 120 readings on individualism and externalism in the philosophy of mind that we won't have time to discuss in the course. They are, sadly, nearly all by philosophers. I have arranged the readings under the following headings.

- General Introductions
- Classic and Early Work
- Mental Causation and Explanation
- Intentionality
- Narrow Content
- Consciousness, Phenomenology, and Experience
- Marr’s Theory of Vision
- Other Cognitive Science and Philosophy of Science
- Philosophy of Language / Mind Interface

There is some inevitable arbitrariness in where some of these readings are slotted. For full references and brief descriptions of each of these readings, please see H below.

**General Introductions**

Ned Block, Owen Flanagan, and Güven Güzeldere (eds.), *The Nature of Consciousness*.  

**Classic and Early Work**

Tyler Burge 1982b, "Other Bodies", in Woodfield 1982.  
Philip Pettit and John McDowell (eds.) 1986, *Subject, Thought, and Context*.  
Mental Causation and Explanation

John Heil and Al Mele, eds. 1993, Mental Causation.
Jaegwon Kim 1993, Supervenience and Mind.
Patricia Kitcher 1985 "Narrow Taxonomy and Wide Functionalism", Phil. of Science 52:78-97.

Intentionality

Akeel Bilgrami 1992, Belief and Content.
Daniel Dennett 1987, The Intentional Stance.
Hartry Field 1978, "Mental Representation", in Block, Readings in the Phil. of Psychology, vol.2.
Jerry Fodor 1990, A Theory of Content and Other Essays.
David Houghton 1997, "Mental Content and External Representations", Phil. Quart. 47:159-177.
John McDowell 1993, Mind and World.
Colin McGinn 1989, Mental Content.
Narrow Content

Gabriel Segal 2000, *A Slim Book About Narrow Content*.
Robert Stalnaker 1990, “Narrow Content”, reprinted in his *Context and Content*.

Consciousness, Phenomenology, and Experience

Fred Dretske, 1996a, *Naturalizing the Mind*.
Brian Loar 2003, “Phenomenal Intentionality as the Basis of Mental Content”, in M. Hahn and B. Ramberg (eds.), *Reflections and Replies: Essays on the Philosophy of Tyler Burge*.
J. Kevin O'Regan and Alva Noë, 2001a, “What it is Like to See: a Sensorimotor Theory of Perceptual Experience”, *Synthese*, 129:79-103..
Marr's Theory of Vision

Tyler Burge 1986a, "Individualism and Psychology", *Philosophical Review* 95:3-45.

Other Cognitive Science and Philosophy of Science

Jerry Fodor 1975, *The Language of Thought*.
Rob Wilson, 2000a, "The Mind Beyond Itself", in D. Sperber, *Metarepresentations*.

Philosophy of Language / Mind Interface

Kent Bach 1987, *Thought and Reference*.
Francois Recanati 1993, *Direct Reference*.
One way to use G is to find a topic that appeals to you, and then use H to home in on the specific readings that seem most suited to your purposes. One way to use H is to find authors who interest you, and trace some links between them, going back to G in order to get a better sense of the lay of the land on some of these topics. Both should be used for writing papers.

**H. ANNOTATED READING GUIDE**

This guide is restricted to articles and books in English that discuss individualism in the philosophy of mind and cognitive science, though many of these cast a wider net. The annotations are brief and, in some cases, idiosyncratic and opinionated, but they may serve to direct your attention if you want to pursue a given topic either during or after the course. Corrections and further suggestions are welcome.

7. Akeel Bilgrami 1992, *Belief and Content*. New York: Basil Blackwell. Defends both the unity of content and what he calls the "locality" of content. Bilgrami characterizes his view as "individualistic externalism", and a good question is whether individualism or externalism gets the upper hand here.

12. David Braun 1991, "Content, Causation, and Cognitive Science", *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 69:375-389. Defends the view that while the usual, explanatory-based arguments for doing cognitive science without a (wide) notion of content are flawed, we just can’t tell (now) whether cognitive science needs a notion of content or not.


15. Tyler Burge 1982b, "Other Bodies", in Woodfield 1982. An attempt to put some distance between himself and Putnam that also contains an early expression of doubt about the possibility of a narrow notion of content.

16. Tyler Burge 1986a, "Individualism and Psychology", *Philosophical Review* 95:3-45. In some ways the most accessible of Burge's papers; the first half recounts the thought experiments and makes some general points; the second half argues that Marr's theory of vision is non-individualistic.

17. Tyler Burge 1986b, "Cartesian Error and the Objectivity of Perception", in Pettit and McDowell 1986, pp.117-136. After some introductory, historical remarks, here Burge offers a version of one of the arguments given in his 1986a on Marr’s theory of vision, here w.r.t. the objectivity of perception in general.


24. Keith Butler 1998, “Content, Computation, and Individuation”, *Synthese*, 114:277-292. Focused largely on Egan 1995 and her claim that content plays a non-realist role in Marr’s theory of vision, but argues that rejection of this view doesn’t lead to anti-individualism.


27. Andy Clark and David Chalmers, 1998, "The Extended Mind", *Analysis* 58:10-23. Argues that we take the idea of the mind extending beyond the body seriously.

28. Tim Crane 1991, "All the Difference in the World", *Philosophical Quarterly* 41:1-25. Challenges the consensus on the significance of the Putnam-Burge arguments by making some claims about the nature of causation that removes the problem to which that consensus is a response.

29. Martin Davies 1986, "Externality, Psychological Explanation, and Narrow Content", *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, pp.263-283. A response to an earlier version of Fodor 1987:ch.2 that discusses the claim that there is a divergence between common sense and psychology w.r.t. content and Fodor’s own proposal regarding narrow content.


38. Frances Egan 1991, "Must Psychology Be Individualistic?", *Philosophical Review* 100:179-203. Argues that while general arguments for individualism fail, insofar as psychology is computational, it is individualistic. Also follows Loar 1988 in arguing against the anti-individualistic conclusions drawn from the Putnam-Burge thought experiment, and against Burge’s interpretation of Marr.

39. Frances Egan 1992, "Individualism, Computation, and Perceptual Content", *Mind* 101:443-459. Argues for the view that a proper understanding of the role of content in cognitive science (esp. in Marr’s theory of vision) undermines both the narrow content program and the claim that content is wide. Also argues that computational individuation is individualistic.
41. Frances Egan 1999, "In Defense of Narrow Mindedness", Mind and Language, 14:177-194. Attempts to show that a proper understanding of computational explanation is consistent with narrow taxonomies, and that these latter are to be preferred.
44. Hartry Field 1978, "Mental Representation", in Ned Block, Readings in the Philosophy of Psychology, vol.2. Harvard University Press. An early articulation of a sort of two factor semantic theory, with only the conceptual role factor being relevant to psychology.
50. Jerry Fodor 1990, A Theory of Content and Other Essays. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. Another collection of Fodor essays, these written since 1981. Perhaps most noted for the two eponymous essays, which were new with the volume.
52. Jerry Fodor 1994, The Elm and the Expert. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. Witty, irreverent, and not without a few signs of desperation, as Fodor continues to grapple with the conciliation of intentionality with the computational nature of thought. Does Fodor here give up on the notion of narrow content, or is he just playing?


58. Terence Horgan, 1993, "From Supervenience to Superdupervenience: Meeting the Demands of a Material World", *Mind*, 102:555-86. An excellent review article on supervenience and the philosophy of mind whose suggestions for "where the action will be" can now be checked, 10 years later.


60. David Houghton, 1993, "From Supervenience to Superdupervenience: Meeting the Demands of a Material World", *Mind*, 102:555-86. An excellent review article on supervenience and the philosophy of mind whose suggestions for "where the action will be" can now be checked, 10 years later.

62. Susan Hurley, 1998, *Consciousness in Action*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. A tour de force or relatively independent chapters that challenges a number of dominant views of consciousness and thought experiments (e.g., Block’s Inverted Earth) commonly used in the consciousness literature.


64. Frank Jackson and Philip Pettit 1988, "Functionalism and Broad Content", *Mind* 97:381-400. Argues that functionalism is compatible with ascriptions of broad (or wide) content, and makes a case for the explanatory utility of wide content as what they call "programme explanations".


66. Patricia Kitcher 1985 "Narrow Taxonomy and Wide Functionalism", *Philosophy of Science* 52:78-97. Argues for a middle ground position that defends computational psychology as individualistic but allows (wide) content to play a role in psychological explanation.


68. Brian Loar 1988a, "Social Content and Psychological Content", in Grimm and Merrill 1988. Widely regarded as one of the best responses to Burge and as providing the basis for an account of narrow content.


Develops a position similar to that of Horgan and Tienson 2002, offering an alternative to the fashion for phenomenal externalism.


73. William Lycan in press, “The Case for Phenomenal Externalism”, in Philosophical Perspectives. As the title suggests, a defence of externalism about the phenomenal, via a representationalist account.


75. Gregory McCulloch 1995, The Mind and Its World. London: Routledge. Belongs to a series that introduces contemporary themes through the history of philosophy. Chapter 7 "Twin Earth" and Chapter 8 "Internalism and Externalism" provide clear introductions to issues relevant to this course.


78. Colin McGinn 1989, Mental Content. New York: Basil Blackwell. A wide-ranging and at time insightful exploration of intentionality and externalism that wanders a lot and whose organization might have been more user friendly (the first chapter is 120 pages).

79. Ruth Garrett Millikan 1984, Language, Thought, and Other Biological Categories. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. Mind-blowingly original when it came out. Millikanese has now become more widespread, largely through the subsequent papers collected in her 1993. Provides, amongst other things, a teleofunctional, externalist account of thought.

80. Ruth Garrett Millikan 1993, White Queen Psychology: Essays for Alice. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. Contains papers that help explain her 1984, as well as several long, new papers (chh.7-8, 14, amounting to 120 pages or so) that move discussion in new directions.


85. Joseph Owens 1987, "In Defence of a Different Doppelganger", Philosophical Review 96, pp.521-554. Argues that although there is a conflict between psychophysical supervenience and individuation by content, this poses no problem for intentionality
since there are no good reasons to accept individualism.

86. Joseph Owens 1993, "Content, Causation, and Psychophysical Supervenience", *Philosophy of Science* 60:242-261. Takes up a theme from Fodor (1987:ch.2) and equivocates in much the way that Fodor himself does on "causal powers".


89. Christopher Peacocke 1981, "Demonstrative Thought and Psychological Explanation", *Synthese* 49, pp.187-217. Argues that demonstrative thought is crucial for psychological explanation and that makes a case for the salience of Fregean modes of presentation.


94. Francois Recanati 1993, *Direct Reference*. Like Bach 1987, a work principally in the philosophy of language, but that takes on broad issues concerning thought and content. Chh.11-12, while not completely self-contained, are independent enough to convey the gist of Recanati’s views on mental content.


97. John Searle 1992, *The Rediscovery of the Mind*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. Searle’s indictment of everything that has happened in philosophy of mind in the last 40 years. Provocative and stimulating, even if he resorts to caricature more often than he thinks.


test employed to determine whether a given psychological theory (in this case, Marr's) is individualistic is inadequate.

102. Lawrence Shapiro 1997, 'A Clearer Vision', Philosophy of Science 64:131-153. Argues against the view of Marr's theory as content-free that Egan has defended, and outlines the role of content in the theory of vision.


105. Kim Sterelny 1990, The Representational Theory of Mind. New York: Basil Blackwell. One of the best introductions to contemporary philosophy of mind; has chapters on Marr's theory of vision (ch.4) and individualism (ch.5); opinionated in the author's usual style.


119. Steve Yablo 1992, "Mental Causation", *Philosophical Review* 101, pp.245-280. A fairly dazzling, ontologically serious paper (nearly all of which appears in his "Cause and Essence", *Synthese*) that deftly defends the counter-intuitive view that the relation of mental to physical is that of determinable to determinate.

I. FIRST ASSIGNMENT

Choose **two** related readings from either G or H above. Read them and answer the following questions about them:

1. What are these papers or books about, and why did you choose them?

2. Focussing on just one claim made in your selected readings, make a case for why that claim is true, or why it is false. Should we accept that claim, or should we reject it? Why?

The assignment should be typed, double-spaced, and submitted with a word count. For undergraduates, the assignment should be **500** words or less. For graduate students, the assignment should be **1000** words or less.

**Due date:** Friday, 24th January, 2002, 12 noon, main office.

Rob Wilson

January 2003