

Matter, Mind, Consciousness (MCB 90E) Freshman Seminar

University of California, Berkeley - Fall 2019

All we know comes to us via our mental experience: our thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and conscious awareness. However, it is a deep mystery how the physical processes of our brain and body relate to the subjective experience of mind. Some say this mind-body relation is the most interesting and important question in all of science. We will address this question from the perspectives of psychology, biology, physics, and philosophy - cognitive science, broadly defined. It is my opinion that for our scientific investigation of the mind-body relation to reach the next place of truly deeper understanding, revolutionary new developments will be required. Study of the nature of mind necessarily is an investigation of who we are and how we relate to everything else we think we know about the universe. What could be more interesting and important than this?

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Office hours: Tuesdays 2:00 to 2:45 PM and Thursdays 3:45 to 4:30 PM

Seminar Meetings: Thursday 2:00 to 3:00 PM in 174 Koshland
Class begins on August 29 and ends on Dec 5. (No meeting on September 12)

Class grade is P/NP. Grade is based on attendance and participation. In order to pass the class, you cannot miss more than 2 meetings. If you intend to miss a class, you must notify me in advance and let me know why you are missing a class meeting. I also ask that you visit my office hours at least twice during the semester. The first visit must be prior to September 27 and the second visit must be prior to April 22. It is highly recommended to come early in the semester, in case you enjoy the experience (highly likely) and wish to come back more often.

Optional Book: *Mind Beyond Brain*, by David Presti (Columbia University Press, 2018)

Readings (from the book and elsewhere) will be assigned for our meetings and will be distributed in class over the course of the semester. So that everyone can participate in the discussion, it is expected that everyone do the readings. There will be short writing assignments (less than one page) based on the readings, to be turned in at the beginning of class. These assignments must be completed on time in order to pass the class. The goal is for this to be an enjoyable adventure in learning about a truly fascinating and important subject!

