

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

University of California, Berkeley - Spring 2022

Instructor: David Presti

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All that we know comes to us by way of our mental experience: our thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and conscious awareness. However, it is a deep mystery as to how objective physical processes associated with 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 investigation of the mind-body relation to reach the next place of truly deeper insight, revolutionary new developments in our scientific approach will be required. Study of the nature of mind necessarily is an investigation of who we are as conscious living beings and how we conceive our relation to the rest of what we understand as reality. What question could be more interesting and important than this?

Class meetings will be in person on Thursdays from 11:10 AM to 12:00 PM (Pacific Time) in Room 107 of Mulford Hall. Class meetings will not be recorded. Attendance is important, as one goal of the Freshman Seminar program is fostering interaction and interpersonal connection between participants. This is all the more important at the present time, in the midst of a pandemic that has necessitated reduction of social interactions and connections that are so very important for human flourishing.

Meet: Thursdays from 11:10 AM to 12:00 PM (Pacific Time). Room 107, Mulford Hall. Class begins on January 20 and ends on April 28.

Book: *Mind Beyond Brain*, by David Presti (Columbia University Press, 2018). We will read this book during the first part of the semester, and the chapters will be made available electronically.

Weekly readings (from *Mind Beyond Brain* and multiple other sources) will be assigned for our meetings and will be distributed electronically via bCourses throughout 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 prior to the class meeting. These assignments must be completed on time in order to pass the class. The purpose of these assignments is simply to catalyze thinking about the readings to be discussed. They will be easy and hopefully fun as well.

Class grade is P/NP. Grade is based on attendance and participation. In order to pass the class, you cannot have any unexcused absences. If you must miss a class because of illness or other unexpected issue, I ask that you notify me in advance and let me know why you are missing a class meeting. That way I will be able to let others in our seminar know where you are. In order to pass you must also submit in a timely fashion all of the weekly reflection essays. Even if you miss a class with an excused absence because of illness or other issue, you are still expected to maintain connection with the material by doing the reading and reflection.

The goal of our class is for this to be an enjoyable adventure in learning about a truly fascinating and important subject! You will not encounter a class like this anywhere else at UC Berkeley, and likely only in very few places anywhere in the world. If you are up for the adventure, please enjoy!

