

Fall 2019 Advanced Topics/400 Level Courses

830:401 Advanced Topics in Human Cognition Cognitive Science of Consciousness and the Self Professors Julien Musolino and Manish Singh TIL 246 MW6 (5:00-6:20pm)

Prerequisites: Cognitive Core : 830:301 (Sensation and Perception) or 830:305 (Cognition) (Jr/Sr 830 Major) or permission of instructor

Cognitive Science of consciousness & self

Throughout history, philosophers and early scientists have often pointed to capacities such as conscious thought, a sense of self, agency, and free will as features distinguishing human beings from other animals. So mysterious were these capacities that for much of intellectual history, they were believed to emanate from a magical soul substance. Today, while consciousness, the self, and free will remain significant problems, they have begun to yield some of their secrets to science. In this course, we will discuss major theoretical and empirical advances as we ponder these perennial questions and ask what mental computations give rise to these quintessentially human traits. In doing so, we will review evidence from a number of disciplines in the sciences of the mind, including psychology, philosophy, and neuroscience. We will discuss issues ranging from philosophical problems, to concrete empirical questions and their broader societal implications as we try to understand how the human brain gives rise to conscious experience, our sense of self, and the feeling that we are free, autonomous agents.