

# SYLLABUS

## Class Meetings

Monday/Wednesday, 1:40-3:00pm, HLL 09

## Contact information

Instructor: Dr. Julien Musolino

e-mail: jumusolino@gmail.com

Office hours: by appointment

## REQUIREMENTS

### READING

No textbook has been assigned for this course. Instead, required readings (in the form of PDF files) are posted on SAKAI. In addition, I will mention a number of books throughout the class, bearing on various topics that we will discuss, any of which students are welcome to purchase and read. None of these books are required.

### EXAMS AND GRADES

Grades will be determined by performance on the following activities:

- **Quizzes**

There will be three quizzes taken in class on **Oct. 02, Oct. 28, and Nov. 25**. Details will be discussed in class.

- **Final Presentation**

Each student will be asked to pair up with another class member and jointly deliver a **15 minute oral presentation** on a relevant topic of their choosing (see Schedule of Topics, Readings, and other Activities for dates – **prior approval of instructor for selected topic will be needed**). The presentation will be evaluated on the basis of content, coherence, originality, and delivery.

### - **Final Report**

In addition to the joint oral presentation, each student will have to produce a separate, two-page, written report summarizing their presentation. Since these reports are short, the writing style and logical structure will be very important. A model will be provided which describes the main components and structure of such reports.

### - **Class participation**

One of the main goals of this course is to foster a dialogue among class participants and between students and their instructor. Consequently, your participation in the discussion will be vital to the success of the course. Please also note that you will be **explicitly asked to state your views** on the topics to be discussed. Since the class is designed to tackle controversial issues, it is crucial that class participants approach these discussions **respectfully, calmly** and **rationally**. My assessment of your class participation will not only take into account your willingness to express yourself but also the tone and the manner in which you conduct yourself during discussions.

### - **Attendance**

Students are expected to attend every class barring exceptional circumstances which will have to be **documented** (e.g., medical issues, etc.). Undocumented absences, or absences for which the justification is not deemed valid, will count against final grades at the instructor's discretion.

### **Grades will be computed using the following weights**

- Quizzes (1/4 of final grade)
- Final Presentation (1/4 of final grade)
- Final Report (1/4 of final grade)
- Class participation (1/4 of final grade)
- Attendance

## **Percentages converted to grades**

90% - 100%	---	A
87% - 89%	---	B+
80% - 86%	---	B
77% - 79%	---	C+
70% - 76%	---	C
60% - 69%	---	D
59% - 0%	---	F

## **RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Exams and assignments**

Barring exceptional circumstances, all exams and assignments will be taken on the date they are assigned.

### **Academic Honesty**

Students in this class are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic honesty and respect. Conduct other than this will be disciplined following procedures detailed in Rutgers University policy on such matters. Academic dishonesty is defined as, but not limited to, plagiarism, harassment, cheating, disrupting behavior, or representing another student's work as your own. For further information on this topic, please visit:

<http://ctaar.rutgers.edu/integrity/policy.html>

### **Religious observances**

Rutgers University's policy on accommodations for religious observances or holidays is available at the following site:

<http://registrar.rutgers.edu/NB/ENROL-NB.HTM#religious>

# Schedule of Topics, Readings & Other activities

## Fall 2013

Week	Date	Topic	Assignments & Activities
1	Sept 04	<b>Introduction</b>	
2	Sept 09 Sept 11	<b><u>PART 1: SCIENCE IN MIND</u></b> Science and the cultural war in the United States	- <b>Introducing yourself</b> - <b>Taking the soul questionnaire</b> <u>Reading</u> : Atheist as the other <u>Reading</u> : Worse than creationism
3	Sept 16 Sept 18	Skepticism 101: politics or science? The road to the ivory tower	- <b>Topic selection for class presentation</b> <u>Reading</u> : Climate Skeptics vs. climate deniers
4	Sept 23 Sept 25	Science and religion: non-overlapping magisteria?	<u>Reading</u> : Religion, morality, and evolution
5	Sept 30 Oct 02	<b><u>PART II: SCIENCE ON THE MIND</u></b> The first principle <b>Quiz 1</b>	- <b>Your views on the issues</b> <u>Reading</u> : Has science killed the soul? Pinker/Dawkins debate
6	Oct 07 Oct 09	The spirit of the age Dualism on trial	<u>Reading</u> : Nothing paranormal about near death experiences
7	Oct 14 Oct 16	Requiem for the soul La Mettrie's revenge	<u>Reading</u> : Knowing where to scratch <u>Reading</u> : Social Neuroscience and the soul's last stand
8	Oct 21 Oct 23	Thinking machines Descartes' children	<u>Reading</u> : Computational theory of mind <u>Reading</u> : Childhood origins of adult resistance to science
9	Oct 28 Oct 30	<b>Quiz 2</b> The sum of all fears	
10	Nov 04 Nov 06	<b><u>PART III: CONSEQUENCES AND IMPLICATIONS</u></b> <b>Free minds?</b> Materialism and the	- <b>Your views on the issues</b> <u>Reading</u> : self is magic - Wegner

		question of free will	<b>Reading:</b> Moral decision-making and the brain
11	Nov 11 Nov 13	<b>Moral minds?</b> Materialism and the question of morality	<b>Reading:</b> For the law, neuroscience changes everything and nothing
12	Nov 18 Nov 20	<b>Disembodied minds?</b> Materialism and the God question	<b>Reading:</b> Morality, by Johnathan Haidt
13	Nov 25 Nov 27	<b>Quiz 3</b>	<b>Reading:</b> Sam Harris epilogue <b>Reading:</b> Preface to 'God: the failed hypothesis', Victor Stenger
14	Dec 02 Dec 04	<b>Students presentations (x4)</b> <b>Students presentations (x4)</b>	
15	Dec 09 Dec 11	<b>Students presentations (x4)</b> <b>Final thoughts</b> <b>Final reports due</b>	<b>- Taking stock: your personal evolution this semester</b>