



Module Specification

Soul, Mind, Nature

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Part 1: Information

Module title: Soul, Mind, Nature

Module code: UZRY8V-15-3

Level: Level 6

For implementation from: 2023-24

UWE credit rating: 15

ECTS credit rating: 7.5

Faculty: Faculty of Health & Applied Sciences

Department: HAS Dept of Social Sciences

Partner institutions: None

Field: Philosophy

Module type: Module

Pre-requisites: None

Excluded combinations: None

Co-requisites: None

Continuing professional development: No

Professional, statutory or regulatory body requirements: None

Part 2: Description

Overview: This module is a study of broadly naturalist approaches to soul and mind in the history of philosophy.

Features: Not applicable

Educational aims: See Learning Outcomes

Outline syllabus: The core problematic of contemporary Anglo-American philosophy of mind positions the problem of 'consciousness' as the 'hard problem'

(David Chalmers). This positioning is derived, this module argues, from the founding Cartesian premise of modern philosophy – that mind is not, in fact, a part of nature – so how can it ever be brought within the compass of the natural sciences.

In contrast, a whole alternative tradition exists in which soul and/or mind are understood to be integral aspects of nature. This module examines that, very diverse, tradition. Examples of thinkers and themes to be studied include:

Ancient conceptions of an ensouled nature. For example Aristotle's conception of the soul as the form of the living, and Plotinus's conception of intellect, soul and material body as continuous emanation.

Monist and/or panpsychist conceptions of mind in nature. For example Spinoza's God or Nature, and Hegel's Absolute Idea.

Process philosophies in which mind is immanent to the fabric of events (rather than substances) that make up the world. For example the work of Alfred North Whitehead and Susanne Langer.

Freudian and neo-Freudian theory, in which mind is understood to stretch beyond consciousness, and to have its roots firmly in ancient animal instincts and drives.

Enactivism, in which mind/cognition, and its phenomenology, is understood to be identical with the internal modulations of a self-organising and autopoietic system – responding to its environment (Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela, Evan Thompson etc.)

There are also some contemporary thinkers who present a kind of naturalism that draws back from acknowledging the immanence of mind to nature, and instead engages in a kind of 'elimination' of the problem of mind by other means. These would include for example:

Neurophilosophy/eliminative-materialism, in which mind is understood to be a mis-description of brain process

(Paul and Patricia Churchland, Daniel Dennett etc).

Extended mind theory, in which mind is understood to be identical with brain processes, in conjunction with an environment to which the brain is always attached (Andy Clarke etc.).

These may be looked at in order to explore the extent of their compatibility with fully naturalistic accounts of mind (or ensouled accounts of nature) such as those outlined above.

Part 3: Teaching and learning methods

Teaching and learning methods: See Assessment

Module Learning outcomes: On successful completion of this module students will achieve the following learning outcomes.

MO1 Demonstrate knowledge of naturalistic philosophies of soul, mind and nature

MO2 Be able to discuss and assess the merits of different interpretations of primary texts and debates in the secondary literature

MO3 Demonstrate the ability to pursue independent research

MO4 Be able to think through the broad philosophical implications of naturalistic philosophies of soul, mind and nature

MO5 Critically engage with arguments or theories of particular philosophers and writers in this area

MO6 Succinctly and clearly develop a philosophical argument

Hours to be allocated: 150

Contact hours:

Independent study/self-guided study = 117 hours

Face-to-face learning = 33 hours

Total = 150

Reading list: The reading list for this module can be accessed at [readinglists.uwe.ac.uk](https://uwe.rl.talis.com/index.html) via the following link <https://uwe.rl.talis.com/index.html>

Part 4: Assessment

Assessment strategy: The assessment profile at Level 3 of the programme now includes a wide array of forms of assessment. This module will be assessed by a 2000 word essay and a portfolio of discussion board contributions/reflections.

Assessment tasks:

Portfolio (First Sit)

Description: Portfolio of discussion board contributions/reflections

Weighting: 50 %

Final assessment: Yes

Group work: No

Learning outcomes tested: MO1, MO2, MO4, MO5, MO6

Written Assignment (First Sit)

Description: Essay (2000 words)

Weighting: 50 %

Final assessment: No

Group work: No

Learning outcomes tested: MO1, MO2, MO3, MO4, MO5

Portfolio (Resit)

Description: Portfolio of discussion board contributions/reflections

Weighting: 50 %

Final assessment: Yes

Group work: No

Learning outcomes tested: MO1, MO2, MO4, MO5, MO6

Written Assignment (Resit)

Description: Essay (2000 words)

Weighting: 50 %

Final assessment: No

Group work: No

Learning outcomes tested: MO1, MO2, MO3, MO4, MO5

Part 5: Contributes towards

This module contributes towards the following programmes of study: