PHL 551 Philosophy of Mind.
Thursday 3:30pm. BUCH D324.
Professor Evan Thompson. evan.thompson@ubc.ca
Office hours: Tues and Thurs 12-1pm.

The topic of this course is mind wandering and attention. What is mind wandering? What is attention? How are they related? Although mind wandering has recently become an area of active research in psychology and neuroscience, philosophers of mind have only begun to contribute to this research. At the same time, there has been a revival of philosophical interest in attention. We will examine recent philosophical work on attention as well as contemporary cognitive science research on mind wandering in order to develop a fuller understanding of mind wandering and its place in our cognitive lives.

My Ph.D. student, Zachary (Zac) Irving, from the University of Toronto, who is writing his dissertation on mind wandering, will be helping to lead this course. His email is: zac.irving@gmail.com

Texts for purchase (available at the UBC Bookstore):
Additional readings available electronically, as indicated on the weekly schedule.

Requirements
1. Regular attendance and participation. There will a sign-in sheet to record attendance. 20%. I may ask students to take the lead in summarizing the readings each week and in raising issues for us to discuss.
2. Midterm paper. No more than 4000 words (approximately 10 pages). 40%. Due October 31. The midterm paper can be an initial draft of the term paper or a separate paper, as you choose.
3. Term paper. No more than 8000 words (approximately 20 pages). 40%. Due December 12.

Your written work should be emailed to ethompsonphilosophy@gmail.com

- Make sure you read the handout, “Philosophy Essay Writing Guidelines,” downloadable at the Connect site for this course, and ensure that your papers conform to these guidelines.
- EXTENSIONS WILL BE GRANTED ONLY IN EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES (e.g., due to illness with a medical note or undue hardship as determined in consultation with me).
- PLAGIARISM WILL NOT BE TOLERATED AND WILL RESULT IN AN AUTOMATIC FAILURE OF THE PAPER, as well as possible further disciplinary action by the University. For the UBC plagiarism policy go to: http://artsone.arts.ubc.ca/resources/ubc-plagiarism-policy/ The University’s definition of plagiarism, along with excellent resources for avoiding plagiarism, can also be found here: http://learningcommons.ubc.ca/resource-guides/avoiding-plagiarism/
Email Policy
The following guidelines apply to email communication during this course:

- I will make every effort to reply to legitimate email inquiries within 24 hours during weekdays.
- Each email message should include in the Subject line the course identifier and a clear statement of purpose (e.g., PHIL 551 Question about Term Paper); otherwise, it may be deleted along with spam messages.
- Use evan.thompson@ubc.ca for all course-related questions; use ethompsonphilosophy@gmail.com only for submitting electronic copies of papers, as instructed above.

Schedule

Introduction

Week 1: Sept. 4. Where we are and how we got there in the cognitive science of mind wandering.

Mind Wandering: Current Philosophical Views.

Week 2: Sept. 11. Mind wandering as loss of mental agency.

Week 3: Sept. 18. Mind wandering as aimless attention.
Zachary Irving, “Mind wandering is aimless attention.”

Week 4: Sept. 25. Mind wandering as mental action.

The Philosophy of Attention.

Week 5: Oct. 2. Attention as cognitive unison.
Christopher Mole, Attention is Cognitive Unison, Chapters 1, 2, & 3.

Week 7: Oct. 16. The erotetic theory of attention.


Week 8: Oct. 23. Consciousness and the dynamics of attention.


**The Cognitive Science of Mind Wandering**


Week 10: Nov. 6. The process-occurrence framework.


http://www.faculty.ucr.edu/~eschwitz/SchwitzAbs/IntrospectionWhat.htm


Week 13: Nov. 27. Mind-wandering and mindfulness.

Antoine Lutz et al., “Investigating the phenomenological and neurocognitive matrix of mindfulness-related practices.”