What is the nature of mind and body? How does this relate to our understanding of consciousness? How does it inform practical considerations of health or well being? These are the broad central questions of our exploration, and you may have more to add.

Today we are recognizing significant openings or upgrades in understanding, for example:

• The penetrating look of neuroscience alongside refined interior exploration, brings a new way of looking. Each has their power, and bringing these views together applies a neurophenomenological (Varela) approach to our questions.
• The world of quantum mechanics has challenged our understanding of reality, rendering a purely materialistic explanation entirely inadequate.
• From the recognition of social influence (and construction) including trauma, we come to see that social context impacts the bodymind at every level of being including gene expression.
• Extending into virtually every domain, a systems approach helps to understand inter-dynamics and reveals reductionism, atomism, and singular linear causality as overly simplistic.
• “Anomolous” phenomenon, from veridical near death events to spontaneous healing, to placebos, to vibrational medicine and more require an expanded understanding of mind-body.
• We are coming to recognize that our thinking itself is a much more embodied process than we have been taught and therefore finding our mind by entering and integrating the body becomes essential for expanded cognition and well being.

Generally we can order this inquiry around three foci:

(1) Conceptions or maps of the body: body as machine, body as system, body as text, body as shadow, body as lived meaning, body-mind as unity, body as energy, body as nature, the integration of technology to extend the body.

(2) Understanding of the body-mind in medicine and psychology—both western and cross-cultural lenses. Topics include: psychoneuroimmunology, stress, the placebo effect, vibrational medicine and subtle energy, enteric nervous system, postmodern medicine, body intelligence, the body of nature, spontaneous healing, biofeedback, gene expression, biopsychosocial integration.

(3) The lived experience of the body: Pleasure, pain, ecstasy, hypnosis and pain, body-knowing, beauty, intuition and empathy, synesthesia, meditation, mystical experience, personality correlates for disease and healing, sex, lessons from death, and near-death, etc.

The course will operate as both a seminar and an experiential laboratory. In addition to reading and theoretical discussion we will also explore various “mind-body experiences” first-hand through experiential work in and outside of class. Further, we will use a project-based design on occasion to focus on special topics or themes (e.g., diet).

One short-answer style midterm exam based on our readings is required (25%). Occasional free-written responses to various readings will be assigned in class (15%). The quality of your engaged “presence” will be worth 10%. In addition, two projects are required.

The first project is a research paper and brief presentation on a topic of your choosing; this is due in the last class (prior to finals) (30%). This is a chance to go in-depth in some area of your particular interest related to the body-mind.

The second project is to practice a body/ mind activity, experiment or discipline for at least a month during the semester (20%). This might involve engaging in a body therapy, taking dance lessons, changing diet, practicing yoga or a martial art, experimenting with a stress management regime, meditation, or any number of things. You will be asked to keep a mind/body journal in order to reflect on your activity (see instructions below).
Please review the following link explaining university-wide policies
https://www.westga.edu/administration/vpaa/common-language-course-syllabi.php

Texts:
• Articles and chapters will be provided on CourseDen, also acquire:
  • Beauregard, M. (2012). *Brain Wars: The Scientific battle over the existence of the mind...*
  • An additional text to be determined.

Grading: midterm exam (25%), “freewrites” (15%), Class “presence” (10%), journal project (20%) final paper (30%).

Journal project Instructions

This project involves practicing a body/mind activity, experiment or discipline for at least four weeks during the semester. You can think of this as a behavioral change experiment. This might involve engaging in taking dance, changing diet or sleep habits, practicing yoga or a martial art, experimenting with a stress management regime, meditation, or any number of things. It would be best to try something at least somewhat new to you. You will be required to do this for a minimum of four weeks. You should plan on something you can do daily and make time as part of your activity to log and reflect on this in your journal.

The “log” part can simply be a description of your activity of the day. Most important is the “reflection,” which invites you to describe your inner process of thoughts, feelings, and sensations as well as behavior as you consider your experience of that day and practice. The reflection gives you a chance to track your experience and notice patterns such as when you encounter frustration, self-doubt, excitement, obstacles, old patterns, and anything else that gets activated in your change experiment.

By the way, keep in mind that by definition, experiments do not succeed or fail they just give outcomes or data. So your work is to engage this earnestly, honestly, and thoughtfully and track what happens.

In writing up the journal feel free to be as creative and playful as you would like. Sometimes drawings, images, poetry or other media can capture inner experiences better than prose, so have license to use a variety of approaches to express your lived experience. The mind/body project is a chance for you to experiment with behavioral change and notice your own patterns. It is also an opportunity to consider how you might help others in the future as they attempt change.

As your *first journal entry* and before you actually start the activity, respond to the following questions:
  • Describe your project in detail. (What will you be doing, how often, with whom, what does it actually involve? etc.)
  • How will you know if you achieved your goals? That is, is there some metric, qualitative (e.g., your mood, etc.) or quantitative (e.g., lost weight, etc.), that you can identity as target and outcome.
  • Why are you doing this? What’s this about for you?
  • Have you attempted this or something like it before? If so, what happened? What did you learn? What will be different this time?
  • What will get in the way of meeting your goals? How might you address this?
  • What part of you is “all in”? That is, what part of you is fully committed to this? What part of you is not? Explain. You may want to have a dialogue in writing between these parts of yourself.

For your *last journal entry* answer the following in a page or more single-spaced reflection. Though you may have additional things to say, be sure to cover the following in your summary:
  • Summarize your project
  • Did you meet your goals?
  • What stands out to you about this?
  • What did you learn about you?
  • What did you learn about behavioral change that you might apply to others?
  • What was the experience of reflecting in the journal?
  • What concepts or practices from Siegel’s *Mindsight*, are relevant to your experiment. Explain.
  • If there was something that you want to remember about this—a “takeaway”—what would it be?