

Philosophy 490 A01 (CRN: 12690)

On Human Nature: A Study of Raymond Tallis' *The Explicit Animal*

Winter Session 2023-2024: First Term (Fall 2023)

General Course Information, Recommended Supplementary Reading, Schedule

1. General Course Information

<u>Location & Time:</u>	CLE B315; Mon. & Thurs. 1:00 p.m. – 2:20 p.m.
<u>Instructor:</u>	Dr. David Scott
<u>Instructor's Office:</u>	CLE B320
<u>Office Hours:</u>	Tues. & Wed. 9:30 – 10:30 (Zoom, by appointment)
<u>Telephone & Email:</u>	250-721-7517; djfscott@uvic.ca

ABOUT THIS COURSE:

Raymond Tallis' work has been devoted to understanding what is distinctive about human being, and as such has been hailed as "a salutary wake-up call for the humanities". Given philosophy's central place in the humanities, it can be viewed as an extended remonstrance against philosophy for its having fallen asleep at the wheel. "The distinctive features of human beings—self-hood, free will, that collective space called the human world, the sense that we lead our lives rather than simply live them as organisms do—are being discarded as illusions by many, even by philosophers, who should think a little harder and question the glamour of science rather than succumbing to it." *The Explicit Animal* endeavours "to make visible the distinctive features of human, as opposed to animal, consciousness." It argues "against neural explanations of consciousness and against the assumption that consciousness in general, and human consciousness in particular, could be explained in evolutionary terms, as an adaptation."

As for Tallis himself, he is described as "[l]iterary, intellectually fretful, ... a member of a rare breed of English polymaths who has been waging a lonely war against the explanations and final theories of radical scientific reductionism... Tallis' enquiring spirit is unlikely to achieve a popular reception: but he may well exert what John Stuart Mill characterized as a 'seminal influence'." Tallis' war is said to be lonely one, because it is waged against the dominant approach of contemporary consciousness studies, the standard starting point of which has been called, by one of its chief proponents, "the objective, materialistic, third-person world of the physical sciences ... the orthodox choice today in the English-speaking world."

In this course we will be supplementing our reading of *The Explicit Animal* with selected texts from the history of philosophy concerning the nature of mind. Part of the point of this course is to indicate the perennial nature of some of Tallis' arguments, and to indicate how much his work is, effectively, an effort to call back philosophers to their roots/mission.

PRIMARY TEXT:

Raymond Tallis, *The Explicit Animal: A Defence of Human Consciousness* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999).

A hard copy will be available on reserve (call # = BD 418.3 T34).

An electronic version is accessible through UVic Library:

<https://link-springer-com.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/book/10.1007%2F978-1-349-27662-2>

MARKING SCHEME:

In-class exam: 30%

In-class exam: 30%

Take-home essay: 40%

Letter grades correspond to the following marks: A+ = 90 - 100, A = 85 - 89, A- = 80 - 84, B+ = 77 - 79, B = 73 - 76, B- = 70 - 72, C+ = 65 - 69, C = 60 - 64, D = 50 - 59, F = 0 - 49.

MAIN EVALUATION CRITERIA:

This course is *highly text-focused*, which means that both in instruction and in evaluation (testing) emphasis is put on your ability to understand the assigned readings and class discussions of them. In this course we will not be relying on secondary literature or commentary, though of course you are always welcome to supplement your reading and class lectures/discussions with secondary material.

The criteria I use to evaluate your work are, I believe, criteria which common sense would suggest in the assessment of philosophical writing. Primarily my concern is with content or substance, i.e., the course material; and in this respect the guiding question is the extent to which a student has understood the material. Of course, this does not mean that form or style count for nothing (and indeed it may not ultimately be possible to divorce form from content).

In indicating the evaluation criteria for this course, I emphasize that philosophy is an *arts* or *humanities* subject, which means that assessing the merits of philosophical writing ultimately requires qualitative evaluation or judgment on my part. Therefore, I do not assign precise numerical values to the following assessment criteria; nor is there a mathematical formula I can employ to judge the quality of your work. However, as a rough guide I employ a list of relative priorities, presented here in ascending order of importance:

- spelling/grammar
- organization & clarity of expression

- accuracy of exposition
- use of examples reflecting understanding of the subject
- breadth of analysis, i.e., number of points covered
- depth of analysis, i.e., how far into the issue analysis is pushed
- resourcefulness, originality and imagination
- tightness, rigor or logical coherence of analysis
- overall quality of philosophical insight and expression

I emphasize that, with the exception of the last criterion—that of overall quality of philosophical insight and expression—in practice the ranking of these criteria is not absolute. Thus, sometimes less important criteria will be given more weight than more important ones. For instance, a student’s use and analysis of examples might be so good that I am led to conclude that that student has an excellent understanding of the subject. In such a case the value I attach to the use of examples might increase significantly, and I might lay less emphasis on the fact that the student has failed (for instance) to cover as many points as other students.

I place a premium on *understanding* the course readings over *criticism* of them. In this connection I cite a line from Bob Dylan’s song, *The Times They are A-Changing*: “Don’t criticize what you don’t understand.” While at some level understanding and criticism intertwine, nonetheless the distinction between them is viable and important. My insistence in this course is on the methodological priority of understanding.

The premium placed here on understanding over criticism presupposes that there is a *right* to criticism that must be *earned* (through understanding), and that criticism that is unearned—i.e., criticism predicated on shortcomings in one’s understanding of the text—is less valuable philosophically than thoroughgoing description. In part, the justification for this view lies in the idea, prevalent in philosophy though not decisive, that the deepest part of philosophy—metaphysics—is a largely descriptive rather than prescriptive exercise (notwithstanding the obvious fact that descriptions, too, must be *argued* for). In the end, the guiding principle being articulated here can be expressed as a quasi-mathematical sentence: Understanding for understanding’s sake is greater than (>) criticism for criticism’s sake.

In practice, this means that in this course “A’s” (a various levels) are entirely within reach for essays that engage exclusively or predominantly in exegesis or description.

CLASS ATTENDANCE, IN-CLASS DISCUSSION AND PARTICIPATION:

Under the heading of “Attendance”, Vic’s Undergraduate Calendar states the following: “Students are expected to attend all classes in which they are enrolled.” The full policy statement in the calendar is here:

https://www.uvic.ca/calendar/undergrad/index.php#/policy/ryNResf_E?bc=true&bcCurrent=03%20%20Attendance&bcGroup=Undergraduate%20Academic%20Regulations&bcItemType=policies.

In this course class attendance will be required for students wishing to discuss class content during office hours. While students are welcomed and encouraged to come to office hours to discuss class content, to do so students need first to have attended class, or at least to have listened to the recordings of the relevant missed class(es) that are posted on Brightspace.

Class attendance is *extremely important* in this course when it comes to evaluation, because you can assume that all forms of testing adopted in this course will focus on the material covered in class. The minimum expectation in all forms of evaluation is that you deal with the material covered in class, and that you address the points raised there about that material. This does not mean that for essays you are expected merely to repeat the in-class proceedings; nor does it mean that you cannot look to external sources for guidance. What it does mean is that in any and all assignments you need to take explicit account of the texts and passages covered in class and to do justice to the in-class discussions of them. Obviously, the best way to ensure that you meet those requires is to attend class. As for use of external sources (i.e., secondary literature), this will be regarded as beneficial only *after* the class-based material has been addressed.

Overall, then, the various assignments for this course constitute part of a continuous whole with the lectures and in-class discussions. They do not float free of the work done in class, but are deliberately constructed to incorporate what goes on there. Assignments that fail to incorporate important points arising out of class discussion will be penalized accordingly. At the same time, essays can also provide you with room to explore topics more deeply than they have been treated in class, and good essays do precisely that. Overall, then, “B+” and “A-” papers take account of and rise to the level of the class discussion; “A” and “A+” papers take that discussion to a higher/deeper level.

If you happen to miss a class, a written summary of the material scheduled for that day will be posted on Brightspace shortly (usually within 24 hours) thereafter. However, it must be emphasized that these are just general summaries, *not* detailed class-notes. They do little more than list the key themes covered in the lecture on a given day, and refer to the passages explicitly covered during the class. A recording of the class will also be posted on Brightspace—again, usually within 24 hours of the class.

CLASSROOM CONDUCT:

(a) The University of Victoria is committed to promoting critical academic discourse while providing a respectful and supportive learning environment. All members of the university community have the right to this experience, and the responsibility to help create, such an environment. The University will not tolerate racism, sexualized violence, or any form of discrimination, bullying or harassment.

Please be advised that by logging into UVic’s learning systems and interacting with online resources, and by attending class, you are engaging in a university activity.

All interactions within this environment are subject to the university expectations and policies. Any concerns about student conduct, may be reviewed and responded to in accordance with the appropriate university policy.

To report concerns about online student conduct: onlineconduct@uvic.ca

(b) Coming late to class: The classroom is a work environment, and when students arrive late this can be a distraction. So please try to be on time.

(c) Visits to the classroom by non-registered students: As the instructor for this class I am *duty-bound* to ensure that a work environment is preserved in the class. Both students and I can find it a distraction for strangers to walk into the classroom. It takes some students a good deal of time before they gain confidence to participate in the class proceedings, and the presence of a stranger can be disruptive in that regard. If, as sometimes happens, you wish to invite a friend to attend my class to check it out, please ask permission ahead of time.

(d) Use of computers in the class: For the purpose of taking notes, you are welcome to use laptops with quiet keyboards in the classroom. Watching films and other distracting uses of computers are prohibited.

EMAILING ME:

Because of problems with SPAM and viruses transmitted by email, I request that whenever you email me you make sure to put something in the subject line of your email that identifies you as a student in this course. If you don't do this, and I don't recognize your name, I will delete your email without opening it. In addition to this, I would greatly appreciate it if you observed the (still) standard courtesy of beginning your emails with a salutation, e.g., "Dear Dr. Scott", "Hello Dr. Scott", etc. (as opposed to, e.g., "Hey Dave" or "Dude", which is too informal). Use of formal salutation is social etiquette rooted in the recognition that people are not simply inanimate objects (like ATM machines), but should be addressed before being spoken to. After all, unlike ATM machines, humans have the *option* to respond, so it's wise to ask them nicely.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

Cheating of *any* kind, including collusion (working with others too closely) and plagiarism from (i) books and/or articles, (ii) other students' papers, and (iii) papers or other material on the internet, is a serious academic offence. University regulations also prohibit students from submitting the same work for two different courses; in other words, plagiarizing or "recycling" one's own work is not permitted. If detected, cheating can result in dismissal from this course (with an "F"), and dismissal from the university. Here is a link to the University's Academic Integrity policy:

<https://web.uvic.ca/calendar2018-09/undergrad/info/regulations/academic-integrity.html#>

SUBMITTING AND RECEIVING BACK GRADED WORK:

(a) Unless otherwise specified, any take-home essays assigned in his course must be *typed (12-font, Times), double-spaced, paginated, and contain the word-count on the front cover*. I will not accept essays that exceed the maximum word limit. Unless otherwise specified, any essays assigned in this course must be submitted *both* as hard-copies (as per the specific instructions of the essay) *and* through Brightspace.

(b) I will not be available to discuss test or essay questions on the day before or on the day they are due to be written or submitted, as I need to avoid being swamped by last-minute enquiries.

(c) In general tests and essays are returned within two weeks of submission. Tests and essays are returned in class, not through Brightspace. When graded work is returned to you it will frequently be annotated with comments. If you wish to discuss your work with me, please read those comments first. To give you a chance to do this, as a matter of policy I do not discuss work on the same day as it is returned.

(d) In cases when I return graded work in class and students are not there to receive it, it is *up to those absent students* to claim their work: I am not responsible for tracking down absent students to deliver them their work. Once I have returned graded work in class, I continue to bring that work to class (usually for about the next three classes), so that students continue to have the opportunity to claim it. After that, however, any unclaimed work is obtainable only by in-person appointment with me. Finally, I will not be available to discuss any work that has gone unclaimed by the time lectures have finished and the examination period has begun.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS / MISSED TESTS:

Late assignments will not be accepted without penalty, unless justified by a medical or other academically legitimate reason. Late assignments will be accepted with a penalty of 5% per day (or part-day, including weekend days or part-days), for a maximum of 4 days (20%). After four days, no late assignments will be accepted.

OFFICE HOURS:

Office hours will be conducted synchronously (by Zoom), and there will be a total of two office hours per week dedicated specifically to this course. Because of demand (especially near test days or essay due-dates), if you wish to see me during office hours you need to make an appointment well ahead of time. To set up a meeting with me in my office hours, contact me either in class or by email, and I will send you the Zoom link for the appointment.

To get the most out of your appointment, it's best to come prepared with specific questions about the course material. If for some reason you cannot meet me in my posted office-hour times, please contact me to arrange an alternative time. While students are welcomed and encouraged to come to office hours to discuss course related matters (incl. class content, tests, essays, etc.), students wishing to make an appointment to discuss class content in particular need first to have attended class, or at least to have listened to the recordings of the relevant

missed class(es) that are posted on Brightspace. This requirement is to prevent this course's office hours being used as a way for students to catch up on classes they have missed. Missed classes can be made up by listening to the class recordings posted on Brightspace.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY OF MATERIAL ON LMS WEBSITE:

Intellectual property of materials on the LMS website: Please note that all assignments for this course and all materials posted to the LMS website are the intellectual property of myself and the University of Victoria. Do not circulate this material or post it to note-sharing sites without my permission. Posting course materials to note-sharing sites or otherwise circulating course materials without the permission of your instructor violates the Policy on Academic Integrity

https://www.uvic.ca/calendar/undergrad/index.php#/policy/Sk_0xsM_V?bc=true&bcCurrent=08%20-%20Policy%20on%20Academic%20Integrity&bcGroup=Undergraduate%20Academic%20Regulations&bcItemType=policies

Any evidence you are circulating materials without permission will be referred to the Chair of the Philosophy Department for investigation.

COPYRIGHT NOTICE:

All course content and materials are made available by instructors for educational purposes and for the exclusive use of students registered in their class. The material is protected under copyright law, even if not marked with a ©. Any further use or distribution of materials to others requires the written permission of the instructor, [except under fair dealing or another exception in the Copyright Act](#). Violations may result in disciplinary action under the [Resolution of Non-Academic Misconduct Allegations policy \(AC1300\)](#).

2. SUPPLEMENTARY LITERATURE (INCL. RESERVE MATERIAL):

- Blackburn, Simon. "Finding Psychology," invited introduction to *Mind, Causation and Action*, ed. Leslie Stevenson, Roger Squires, John Haldane (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), pp. 1-12. [BD 541 M46]
- Blakemore, Colin, and Susan Greenfield, eds. *Mindwaves: Thoughts on Intelligence, Identity, and Consciousness* (1987). [BF 311 M554]
- Campbell, C. A. *On Selfhood and Godhood* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1957). [BF 311 C22]
- Chalmers, David. "The Hard Problem," in *The Conscious Mind: In Search of a Fundamental Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996). [BD 418.3 C43]
- Cornwell, J. "Review of Raymond Tallis' *The Hand: A Philosophical Inquiry in Human Being* (2003), *I Am: A Philosophical Inquiry into First-Person Being* (2004), and *The Knowing Animal: A Philosophical Inquiry into Knowledge and Truth* (2005),"

- in *Brain*, 12/2004, Volume 128, Issue 2, pp. 443-446. [Available through UVic Library catalogue]
- Hacker, Peter. "Languages, Minds and Brains," Ch. 31 of *Mindwaves: Thoughts on Intelligence, Identity and Consciousness*, ed. Colin Blakemore and Susan Greenfield (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 484-505. [BF 311 M554.]
- Hamlyn, D. W. *In and Out of the Black Box: On the Philosophy of Cognition* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989). [BF 311 H3175]
- Jackson, Frank. "What Mary Didn't Know," *The Journal of Philosophy* 83 (1986): 291-295. [Available online through UVic Library catalogue.]
- Lewis, Hywel D. *The Elusive Mind* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd. 1969). [BF 161 L48]
- Lewis, Hywel D. *The Elusive Self*, based on The Gifford Lectures, delivered in The University of Edinburgh 1966-1968 (London & Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press Ltd. 1982). [BD 450 L48]
- McGinn, Colin. "Can We Solve the Mind-Body Problem?" *Mind*, New Series, 98 (1989), pp. 349-366. [Available online through UVic Library catalogue]
- Nagel, Thomas. "What is it Like to Be a Bat?," *Philosophical Review* 83 (1974), pp. 435-450. [Available online through UVic Library catalogue.]
- Nagel, Thomas. "Brain Bisection and the Unity of Consciousness," in *Mortal Questions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 147-164.
- Robinson, Howard. *Matter and Sense: A Critique of Contemporary Materialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982). [B 825 R6]
- Robinson, Howard, ed. *Objections to Physicalism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993). [B 825 O24.]
- Searle, John. "Minds, Brains, and Programs," *The Behavioural and Brain Sciences* 3 (1980), pp. 417-457. [Available online through UVic Library catalogue.]
- Stevenson, Leslie, and Roger Squires, and John Haldane, eds., *Mind, Causation and Action* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986). [BD 541 M46.]
- Tallis, Raymond. *Aping Mankind: Neuromania, Darwinitis and the Misrepresentation of Humanity* (Durham: Acumen 2011). [QP 360.5 T354 2011. Available as ebook through UVic Library]
- Tallis, Raymond. *I Am: A Philosophical Inquiry into First-Person Being* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 2004). [BD 438.5 T35.]
- Tallis, Raymond. *Seeing Ourselves: Reclaiming Humanity from God and Science* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Agenda Publishing, 2020). [BD 450 T25 2020. On reserve UVic Library]
- Teichman, Jenny. *Philosophy and the Mind* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988). [BF 38 343.]
- Vidal, Fernando. Review of *Aping Mankind: Neuromania, Darwinitis and the Misrepresentation of Humanity* (Durham: Acumen, 2011), in *ISIS* 103: 3 (2012), pp. 628-629. [Available through UVic Library catalogue.]

3. CLASS SCHEDULE* & IMPORTANT DATES:

Below is a schedule of the order in which I hope to cover the topics covered in *The Explicit Animal*. Although this book is short, it is quite dense at times. For this reason I strongly advise you to start reading it straight away, and not to wait until we come to the topics as they are advertised in the schedule. An early general sense of the work as a whole will help you better understand the specific topics and arguments that we cover in class.

PROVISIONAL SCHEDULE*

WEEK 1 (Class 1: Sept. 7)

1. Thurs. Sept. 7 - Course Introduction: Biography & assessments of Tallis.
- Philosophical culture wars, cf. William James “The Present Dilemma in Philosophy”. Tallis, *Aping Mankind*, pp. 15-49.

WEEK 2 (Classes 2 & 3: Sept. 11 & 14)

2. Mon. Sept. 11 - “Overture” (1-6) & Ch. 1: “Losing Consciousness” (1-17).
3. Thurs. Sept. 14 - “Overture” (1-6) & Ch. 1: “Losing Consciousness” (1-17).

WEEK 3 (Classes 4 & 5: Sept. 18 & 21)

4. Mon. Sept. 18 - Ch. 2: “Biologizing Consciousness I: Evolutionary Theories” (18-44).
5. Thurs. Sept. 21 - Ch. 2: “Biologizing Consciousness I: Evolutionary Theories” (18-44).

WEEK 4 (Classes 6 & 7: Sept. 25 & 28)

6. Mon. Sept. 25 - Ch. 3: “Biologizing Consciousness II: The CTP” (45-101).
7. Thurs. Sept. 28 - Ch. 3: “Biologizing Consciousness II: The CTP” (45-101).

WEEK 5 (Class 8: Oct. 5)

- Mon. Oct. 2 - **No Classes (National Day of Truth and Reconciliation)**
8. Thurs. Oct. 5 - **First In-class Exam.**

WEEK 6 (Class 9: Oct. 12)

- Mon. Oct. 9 - **No Classes (Thanksgiving Day)**
9. Thurs. Oct. 12 - Ch. 3: “Biologizing Consciousness II: The CTP” (45-101).

WEEK 7 (Classes 10 & 11: Oct. 16 & 19)

10. Mon. Oct. 16 - Ch. 3: “Biologizing Consciousness II: The CTP” (45-101).
11. Thurs. Oct. 19 - Ch. 4: “Computerizing Consciousness” (102-140).

WEEK 8 (Classes 12 & 13: Oct. 23 & 26)

12. Mon. Oct. 23 - Ch. 4: “Computerizing Consciousness” (102-140).

13. Thurs. Oct. 26 - Ch. 4: “Computerizing Consciousness” (102-140).

WEEK 9 (Classes 14 & 15: Oct. 30 & Nov. 2)

14. Mon. Oct. 30 - Ch. 4: “Computerizing Consciousness” (102-140).

15. Thurs. Nov. 2- Ch. 5: “Emptying Consciousness: Functionalism” (141-160).

WEEK 10 (Class 16 & 17: Nov. 6 & 9)

16. Mon. Nov. 6 - Ch. 5: “Emptying Consciousness: Functionalism” (141-160).

17. Thurs. Nov. 9- **Second In-class Exam.**

WEEK 11 (Class 18: Nov. 16)

Mon. Nov. 13 - **No Classes (Remembrance Day)**

18. Thurs. Nov. 16 - Ch. 6: “Man, The Explicit Animal” (161-209).

WEEK 12 (Classes 19 & 20: Nov. 20 & 23)

19. Mon. Nov. 20 - Ch. 6: “Man, The Explicit Animal” (161-209).

20. Thurs. Nov. 23 - Ch. 6: “Man, The Explicit Animal” (161-209).

WEEK 13 (Classes 21 & 22: Nov. 27 & 30)

21. Mon. Nov. 28 - Ch. 7: “Recovering Consciousness” (210-250).

22. Thurs. Nov. 30 - Ch. 7: “Recovering Consciousness” (210-250).

Fri. Dec. 1 - Draft Take-Home Essay Questions Assigned.

WEEK 14 (Class 23: Dec. 4)

23. Mon. Dec. 4 - Ch. 7: “Recovering Consciousness” (210-250).

- Take-Home Essay Questions Assigned.

FINAL EXAM PERIOD: Dec. 7 – 20

Fri. Dec. 15 - Final Take-Home Essay Questions Due.

* This schedule may be subject to slight revision, as sometimes discussion and the flow of ideas in class require us to spend more time on certain subjects, less time on others, than originally planned.