



**John F. Kennedy University**  
**College of Graduate and Professional Studies**  
**CNS5037.1 Neurophilosophy**  
**Fall 2014**

**College Mission:**

The College of Graduate and Professional Studies provides an academic environment that is rigorous, supportive, and transformative. Aspiring artists, clinicians, managers, museum professionals, therapists, and consultants are offered an array of opportunities to develop the knowledge, skills, and understanding needed to reach their potential.

Our graduate-level degree and certificate programs provide a solid foundation in the theoretical bases of the field of study, opportunities for specialized study, and an abundance of supervised traineeships, internships, or other types of field studies. All of our programs are also designed to help graduates solidify their commitment and confidence to be effective change agents in their communities and the world.

**Program Mission:**

The mission of the Consciousness and Transformative Studies Program to explore the nature of consciousness and the development of human potential on a personal, social, cultural and global level.

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<b>Office Hours:</b>	By Appointment
<b>Class Days/Time:</b>	Tuesdays: 10/14 - 12/2; 7:15pm -9:45pm
<b>Units:</b>	2
<b>Classroom:</b>	Pleasant Hill Campus: Room N158

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**Course Description:**

The magnificence of the three pound, tofu-like organ known as the brain is exemplified in the arts, sciences, and in its ability to regulate the complex human body. However, neuroscience has revealed that psychological suffering is often self-imposed by this very same organ; the product of a brain programmed by genetics for survival and conditioned by popular culture. The result is a brain that is unconsciously biased towards perceptions that lead to fear, frustration, and continual dissatisfaction.

Our class will pursue the wisdom of conscious living by reflecting upon how the brain shapes our thoughts, perceptions, and emotional responses. Students will investigate the philosophical implications of these ideas in order to gain unique perspectives on the nature of human happiness, creativity, compassion, and authenticity. Additionally, students will engage in games, creative exercises, mindfulness practices, and other activities to gain a felt sense of these ideas and to embody these new perspectives.

**Program Learning Outcomes:**

- Explain key theories of Consciousness from five perspectives: transpersonal psychology, philosophy of consciousness, quantum physics, living systems theory, spiritual systems.
- Create a holistic paradigm of Consciousness that integrates the five perspectives from above.
- Apply a holistic paradigm of consciousness as it relates to personal development, emotional intelligence and interpersonal communication.
- **Apply a holistic paradigm of consciousness to a professional interest, career objective, or to a concrete application designed to foster social change in the world.**

**Course Learning Outcomes:**

*At the conclusion of this course, students will be able to:*

- Explain what role neurophysiology plays in behavior and human happiness.
- Critically reflect upon how neuroscience may affect philosophical issues pertaining to epistemology, personal identity, free will, the validity of religious beliefs, and others.
- Describe and compare various experiential practices meant to nurture consciousness transformation through neural self-rewiring.

**Required Texts:**

Hanson, Rick. Buddha's Brain. New Harbinger Publications, 2009.

Other required readings will be made available on our course website.

[www.thinking-differently.com/neurophilosophy](http://www.thinking-differently.com/neurophilosophy)

**Other equipment / material requirements:**

A device to view online readings and handouts.

**Teaching Methodology:**

Lecture	30%
Discussion	40%
Experiential	30%

**Grading:**

Letter grades are earned as follows:

Letter Grade	Percentage Range
A+	96.5-100
A	92.5-96.4
A-	89.5-92.4
B+	86.5-89.4
B	82.5-86.4
B-	79.5-82.4
C+	76.5-79.4
C	69.5-76.4
D+	66.5-69.4
D	62.5-66.4
D-	59.5-62.4
F	0-59.4

*Credit/No Credit Students:* To receive credit for the course, a minimum of 80 points are required.

**Assignments:**

Total points possible in all course activities: 100 points.

- *Class Participation:* 10 points. (Based on level of participation in class activities and discussions.)
- *Weekly Reflection Assignments (5):* 5 points each. (These are one page summaries of the student's experience with an exercise and readings during the week following a class meeting and will be graded based on completion.)
- *Weekly Self-Assessments (6):* 5 points each.
- *Final Paper & Presentation Proposal:* 5 points. (This is a one paragraph description of the following: 1) the question(s) of inquiry the student aims to explore in their paper and 2) how this question is personally relevant to the student. Due 11/18 via email.)
- *Final Paper & Presentation:* 30 points. (Due date is 12/2. In this research paper, students will explore a neurophilosophical question of their choosing, relating his/her findings to consciousness transformation and personal significance. More information will be provided in class.)

It is expected that students perform the following:

- *Actively participate* in sharing their ideas, experiences, questions, and concerns around the course material.
- *Come prepared* for each class by completing assignments and required readings.

**Course Schedule:**

Weekly Schedule

### **Class 1      The Changing Brain**

Our first class we will have an introduction to neurophilosophy, basic neuroscience, and a discussion of how we can change our brain structures in order to change our thinking habits.

*Assignment for next class*

- Complete assigned reading(s).
- Practice an exercise discussed in class and complete a 1-page self-reflection.

### **Class 2      The Thinking Brain**

We will look into the differences between the two hemispheres of the brain and discuss how these are related to reason, intuition, and well-being.

*Assignment for next class*

- Complete assigned reading(s).
- Practice an exercise discussed in class and complete a 1-page self-reflection.

### **Class 3      The Emotional Brain**

We will discuss the function of the limbic system and how the various components of the brain affect our emotional responses. We will specifically explore the relationship between the brain, psychological suffering, and the development of the ego.

*Assignment for next class*

- Complete assigned reading(s).
- Practice an exercise discussed in class and complete a 1-page self-reflection.

### **Class 4      The Happy Brain**

Our fourth class will review the psychology of happiness. In particular, we will reflect upon the relationship between neurobiology and intention, the hedonic treadmill, and flow experiences.

*Assignment for next class*

- Complete assigned reading(s).
- Practice an exercise discussed in class and complete a 1-page self-reflection.

### **Class 5      The Creative Brain**

This highly interactive class meeting will explore the neuropsychology of creative thinking and the creative processes. The emphasis will be on understanding how the brain creates (and has the ability to overcome) obstacles to manifesting change and obstacles to discovering new ideas.

*Assignment for next class*

- Complete assigned reading(s).
- Complete final paper proposal (to be submitted via email).

## **Class 6      Compassion & the Social Brain**

We will review the relationship between our neural structures and our capacity for love, empathy, and the role they play in the quality of our social interactions

*Assignment for next class*

- Complete assigned reading(s).
- Practice an exercise discussed in class and complete a 1-page self-reflection.

## **Class 7      Authenticity, Spirituality, and the Meaning Making Brain**

We will reflect on the nature of the self and what authenticity means in light of neuroscience. We will also discuss the relationship between the brain and religious experiences, and the philosophical implications of a brain designed to make meaning.

*Assignment for next class*

- Complete final paper and prepare for presentation.

## **Class 8      Conclusions & Presentations**

Our last class will consist of student presentations and concluding thoughts on the course material and its significance to consciousness transformation.

Due Today: *Final Paper & Presentation.*

### **Attendance:**

As noted in the University catalog, students are expected to attend all class meetings of the course in which they are enrolled and to comply with attendance requirements specified in the course syllabus. Excessive unexcused absences may affect the course grade.

### **CTS Attendance and Absence Policy:**

#### **Attendance:**

Attendance is taken at each class meeting, in accordance with university policy. Students are expected to arrive punctually. Late arrivals (i.e. more than 15 minutes) may be counted as absences by the instructor. Students are expected to attend all classes for the entire class period.

#### **Absences:**

Students are expected to notify instructors as soon as possible, preferably before the absence occurs, regarding any absence or partial absence. Planned absences must be discussed with the instructor at the beginning of the quarter. For any classes missed, it is the student's responsibility to obtain all notes, assignments, handouts, and to make up course examinations.

Examples of valid absences include verified illness, death in the family, or jury duty. In the case of medical emergencies, students are required to provide the instructor with documentation from the treating physician or facility to inform the instructor's decision.

For a three unit course: One absence (2.5 hr block) should not substantially interfere with the student passing the course. With two absences, however, a substantial portion of class material has been missed, and the student may or may not pass the course, at the instructor's discretion. Three or more absences result in the student not passing, or having to withdraw from the course.

For a two unit course: With one absence (2.5 hr block), a substantial portion of class material has been missed, and the student may or may not pass the course, at the instructor's discretion. Two or more absences result in the student not passing, or having to withdraw from the course.

For a one unit course: One absence (2.5 hr block) results in the student not passing or having to withdraw from the course.

**Email:**

All students enrolled in CTS courses are required to use their JFKU email address for all email communications related to JFK coursework and CTS program concerns.

**E College Information:**

To access your online course go to <http://www.myonlinelogin.com>. Your Login ID is your JFKU ID number and your password is your six digit date of birth (mmddy). Your password should have been automatically sent to you via email.

For technical assistance or login information please contact 1-877-252-7715 or e-mail [helpdesk@myonlinelogin.com](mailto:helpdesk@myonlinelogin.com).

(List all eCollege information here. Include whether course is an online or hybrid course and how e college course site will be used.

**Online Discussion Etiquette**

Participating in online discussions as part of your coursework is different than blogging or engaging in social media as the protocol is different between friendships and professional relationships.

Consider these guidelines for your contributions to online discussion:

- Only say online what you would also say in person.
- Be careful of informal tone – sarcasm or joking can be interpreted as offensive or mean-spirited online.
- Use proper punctuation and formatting – Capital letters online are the equivalent of shouting in person. Proper capitalization and correct grammar will increase your voice

online by showing that you are educated, value what others think of you, and that you value professionalism.

- Be honest and transparent – if you choose to use real-life examples, make sure that they are real and check out under a bit of scrutiny, because people will check and sometimes ask. If you are not honest and open, people will sense this and will not trust you.
- Contribute to the conversation – Contribute to the conversation with relevant replies that show that you have read, processed and taken seriously the ideas of others. Replying with useful information will encourage increased participation by others, and you will also gain the reputation as someone who cares about others and the ideas that are important to the entire group.

**University Academic Policy, including Registration information:**

<http://www.jfku.edu/assets/resources/pageResources/JFKU%20Catalog%202011%20for%20web.pdf>, Pages 7-18

**Academic Honesty:**

<http://www.jfku.edu/assets/resources/pageResources/Plagiarism.pdf>

*Cheating* is the act of aiding or abetting any act that a reasonable person would conclude, when informed of the evidence, to be a dishonest means of obtaining or attempting to obtain credit for academic work.

- Copying, in part or whole, from another's examination, paper, research or creative project;
- Submitting as one's own work that has been purchased, borrowed, or stolen;
- Fabricating data;
- Employing a surrogate to take an examination, write a paper, or complete, in whole or in part, an assignment;
- Turning in work done for another course, unless given permission by the instructor(s).

*Plagiarism:* Plagiarism is the presentation of words, ideas or views of someone else as if they were one's own. Plagiarism is intellectual dishonesty and, as such, is a serious academic offense. The potential penalties for plagiarism range from an unsatisfactory grade in the course (an 'F' or 'no credit'), a letter of sanction placed in the student's permanent academic file, or even dismissal from the university. Plagiarism includes:

- passing off another's written work as your own;
- failing to give credit to your sources for the ideas, information, and words you have borrowed from them;
- not quoting when you use another's exact words;
- not changing the wording or sentence structure significantly enough when you paraphrase a source.

**University Student Services:**

<http://www.jfku.edu/assets/resources/pageResources/JFKU%20Catalog%202011%20for%20web.pdf>, Pages 18-20

**Academic Support Center (ASC)**

The ASC provides individual instruction in writing, study skills, and APA citation style. The instructors can act as a second pair of eyes on your paper, working with you to identify your patterns and improve your abilities. Appointments can be held in person or via phone, fax or email. Students may meet with an instructor a maximum of once per week; those who are registered with the Office of Disability Services may have 2 appointments per week. All ASC services are free to

registered students, faculty, and staff. Students can make an appointment by calling [925.969.3530](tel:925.969.3530) or emailing [asc@jfkku.edu](mailto:asc@jfkku.edu).

**Writing & Math Centers:** All JFK University students have access to additional free writing and math support through the National University System's Writing & Math Centers. Schedule an appointment with the NU Writing Center at: <http://www.nu.edu/OurPrograms/StudentServices/WritingCenter/OnlineWritingCenter.html>. NU Math support: Tutoring is available to students in the fields of mathematics, statistics, sciences, engineering and business mathematics. Schedule an appointment with the NU Math Center at: <http://www.nu.edu/OurPrograms/StudentServices/mathcenter.html>.

### **Office of Disability Services (ODS) for Students - Educational**

All students who are in need of accommodations related to a documented physical, learning, or mental health disability are encouraged to meet with the Office of Disability Services for Students (ODS) in Room S220, 925-969-3447, early in the quarter, and utilize the support services that they offer.

Please note that classroom accommodations cannot be made until you have registered with ODS, received an Accommodation Letter, and provided a copy to your instructor. It is your decision as to when you deliver your Accommodation Letter to an instructor, but accommodations cannot be provided until that time; accommodations are not provided retroactively.

### **Libraries**

The JFKU Libraries system consists of the central Robert M. Fisher Library in Pleasant Hill and its branches on the Berkeley and San Jose campuses as well as the Law Library, also located on the Pleasant Hill campus. The Libraries' collections include nearly 200,000 books, journals and media titles, thousands of which are accessible online.

It is the Libraries' mission to support learning, scholarship, professional development and student success. Librarians are available to assist with your research needs by phone, email, online chat or in person. Please visit your library or the library web site at <http://library.jfkku.edu/> for further information.

### **Course Evaluation**

During your last class session, you will be asked to complete an evaluation of the course and instructor. In most cases, course evaluations are completed online and can be completed from computers and mobile devices.

The evaluation is anonymous and does not collect any student information. It asks you to rate the course (from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree) in several areas. You are also encouraged to provide written comments to clarify your ratings. The college Dean, program Chair and instructor are only provided with a summary of the evaluation results (including transcribed comments) and do not receive completed individual evaluation forms, thus preserving your anonymity. We appreciate the feedback you provide in the course evaluation. We use that feedback as part of our ongoing program assessment and to inform possible course and program changes. Please provide your feedback in a thoughtful and professional manner.