

# The Ethical Brain: Philosophy and Neuroscience

## Time and Place

### Physical Venue:

Thursdays 13:30-16:00

Faculty of Theology, University of Copenhagen,

South Campus, Karen Blixens Plads 16, Room 6B.0.22

### Online Platform:

<https://ucph-ku.zoom.us/j/2188071867>

## Description of Course

The past three decades have seen an explosive surge in neuroscientific explanations of human nature, promising clear-cut biological answers to commonplace philosophical questions concerning rationality, emotion, behavior, values, and ethics. This course sets out to examine to what extent such a promise is warranted – in particular concerning existential questions such as anxiety, responsibility, and religious faith

## Learning Objectives

By the end of this course you will be able to understand and evaluate critically the growing presence of neuroscience in discussions about human nature and ethics – in public media, in policy making, and in academic research. Besides getting a solid understanding of the historical development of the 'neuroscientific image of human nature', you will learn about paradigmatic ethical theories; the complex relation between science, philosophy, and religion; and fundamental theoretical issues concerning the contemporary endeavor to naturalize human nature, and ethics in particular. This should enable you to participate in discussions about the virtues and limits of neuroscience, to discern between valid scientific claims and less tenable scientific claims, and to distinguish sound critique of scientism from mere science bashing.

## Faculty

René Rosfort, PhD & MA (University of Copenhagen, 2008 & 2003). Associate Professor of Ethics and Philosophy of Religion (Søren Kierkegaard Research Centre, University of Copenhagen). For more information, see [here](http://teol.ku.dk/skc/english/staff/?pure=en/persons/77458) [.\(http://teol.ku.dk/skc/english/staff/?pure=en/persons/77458\)](http://teol.ku.dk/skc/english/staff/?pure=en/persons/77458)

## Office Hours

Wednesdays 1:00-3:00pm

Faculty of Theology, University of Copenhagen

South Campus, Karen Blixens Plads 16, Room 6B.1.19

## **Textbooks**

- Kathleen Taylor. *The Brain Supremacy: Notes from the Frontiers of Neuroscience*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2012.
- John Deigh. *An Introduction to Ethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2010.

## **Approach to teaching**

The sessions are structured as a combination of lecture, discussion, and group work with a focus on engaging the student. Each session is framed by a systematic PowerPoint presentation of the themes and readings in question. The presentation will encourage and guide the discussion and the group work in the class. The student can expect a lively and systematically oriented teacher who will attempt to make the issues both interesting and relevant to a contemporary setting while maintaining a substantial theoretical level and the necessary historical perspective.

## **Expectations of the students**

The students are expected to have prepared themselves carefully for each class, that is, to have done the required reading and to think about issues, problems, and questions to be discussed in class. Moreover, the students are expected to engage in the discussions as well as the group work, and to make use of both the theoretical tools and the historical background when discussing the issues in question. According to UCPH policy, all students must be present 75% of the time to receive a grade. (For DIS students: the DIS Director of Teaching and Learning, and the Director of Student Affairs, must be notified if you are absent four times or more).

## **Requirements**

For undergraduate students (bachelor students):

Active attendance (at least attendance in 75% of the sessions documented by protocol). The syllabus volume and content are determined by the teacher, and three papers are to be submitted to the teacher of each 9,600-12,000 characters, i.e. 4-5 pages, as well as a final major assignment, which has a size of 19,200-24,000 characters, i.e. 8-10 pages, and based on 400-500 pages literature in agreement with the teacher. The assignments are assessed by the teacher and the final assessment is given in accordance with the 7-point grading scale. If participation takes place via streaming for more than 25% of the sessions, the following is required to pass the course: An assignment that has a scope of 36,000-48,000 characters, i.e. 15-20 pages, and based on 1,200 to 1,500 pages of literature. The teacher must approve the subject and literature.

For graduate students (kandidat/master students):

Active attendance (at least attendance in 75% of the sessions documented by protocol). The syllabus volume and content are determined by the teacher, and three papers are to be submitted to the teacher of each 9,600-12,000 characters, ie. 4-5 pages, as well as a final paper of 26,400-36,000 characters, i.e. 11-15 pages, and based on 800-1000 pages of literature in agreement with the teacher. The assignments are assessed by the teacher, and the final assessment is given in accordance with the 7-point grading scale. If participation takes place via streaming for more than 25% of the sessions, the following is required to pass the course: An assignment of 60,000-72,000 characters, i.e. 25-30 pages, and based on approx. 1,500 pages of literature. The teacher must approve the subject and literature.

### **Exams and Grading**

**3 Short Assignments of 4-5 pages** (each counting for 15% of the final grade) 45%

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**Final Paper of 10-12 pages** (10-12 pages) 45%

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**Engaged Participation** 10%

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### **Plagiarism Policy**

In accordance with UCPH rules for academic ethics, there will be a no tolerance policy towards cheating and plagiarism. The submission of any paper which is not your own work will result in an automatic fail and may have severe consequences for your future studies

# Fagets læseplan

[Spring til i dag](#)

 [Rediger](#)

Læseplan-siden viser en tabel-orienteret visning af fagets program og basis for fagets karaktergivning. Du kan tilføje alle andre kommentarer, noter, eller tanker, du har om fagets struktur, politik eller andet.

For at tilføje kommentarer, klik "Rediger" linket øverst.

## Oversigt over fag:

Dato	Nærmere oplysninger	Forfaldet
tors den 26. Aug 2021	 <a href="#">Session 1. Introduction: Thinking About the Brain - Existing With the Brain</a> ( <a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event id=83863&amp;include contexts=course 52634">https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event id=83863&amp;include contexts=course 52634</a> )	13.30 til 16:00
tors den 2. Sep 2021	 <a href="#">Session 2. From the Soul to the Brain: A Historical Perspective</a> ( <a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event id=83877&amp;include contexts=course 52634">https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event id=83877&amp;include contexts=course 52634</a> )	13.30 til 16:00
tors den 9. Sep 2021	 <a href="#">Session 3: Darwin, Evolution, and Religion</a> ( <a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event id=83862&amp;include contexts=course 52634">https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event id=83862&amp;include contexts=course 52634</a> )	13.30 til 16:00
onsd den 22. Sep 2021	 <a href="#">1st Short Assignment</a> ( <a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/courses/52634/assignments/131082">https://absalon.instructure.com/courses/52634/assignments/131082</a> )	forfaldet 23.59
tors den 23. Sep 2021	 <a href="#">Session 4. Naturalism: The End of the Journey?</a> ( <a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event id=83864&amp;include contexts=course 52634">https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event id=83864&amp;include contexts=course 52634</a> )	13.30 til 16:00
tors den 30. Sep 2021	 <a href="#">Session 5. Ethical Theories: Aristotle and Virtue Ethics</a> ( <a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event id=83865&amp;include contexts=course 52634">https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event id=83865&amp;include contexts=course 52634</a> )	13.30 til 16:00

Dato	Nærmere oplysninger	Forfalder
tors den 7. Okt 2021	 <a href="#"><u>Session 6. Ethical Theories: David Hume and Sentimentalism</u></a> <a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=83878&amp;include_contexts=course_52634">           (https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=83878&amp;include_contexts=course 52634)         </a>	13.30 til 16:00
onsd den 20. Okt 2021	 <a href="#"><u>2nd Short Assignment</u></a> <a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/courses/52634/assignments/131083">           (https://absalon.instructure.com/courses/52634/assignments/131083)         </a>	forfalder 23.59
tors den 21. Okt 2021	 <a href="#"><u>Session 7. Ethical Theories: Immanuel Kant and Deontology</u></a> <a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=83879&amp;include_contexts=course_52634">           (https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=83879&amp;include_contexts=course 52634)         </a>	13.30 til 16:00
onsd den 10. Nov 2021	 <a href="#"><u>3rd Short Assignment</u></a> <a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/courses/52634/assignments/131084">           (https://absalon.instructure.com/courses/52634/assignments/131084)         </a>	forfalder 23.59
tors den 11. Nov 2021	 <a href="#"><u>Session 8. Ethical Theories: John Stuart Mill and Utilitarianism</u></a> <a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=83875&amp;include_contexts=course_52634">           (https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=83875&amp;include_contexts=course 52634)         </a>	13.30 til 16:00
onsd den 17. Nov 2021	 <a href="#"><u>Session 9. The Feeling Brain: Emotions, Neurons, and Rationality</u></a> <a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=83871&amp;include_contexts=course_52634">           (https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=83871&amp;include_contexts=course 52634)         </a>	13.30 til 16:00
tors den 18. Nov 2021	 <a href="#"><u>Session 10. The Self: Reality - Problem - Illusion</u></a> <a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=83872&amp;include_contexts=course_52634">           (https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=83872&amp;include_contexts=course 52634)         </a>	13.30 til 16:00
tors den 2. Dec 2021	 <a href="#"><u>Session 11. How to Live with a Bad Brain: Depression, Suffering, and Responsibility</u></a> <a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=83876&amp;include_contexts=course_52634">           (https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=83876&amp;include_contexts=course 52634)         </a>	13.30 til 16:00
tors den 9. Dec 2021	 <a href="#"><u>Session 12. Neuroethics: Reality, Morality, and Human Beings</u></a> <a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=83866&amp;include_contexts=course_52634">           (https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=83866&amp;include_contexts=course 52634)         </a>	13.30 til 16:00
tors den 16. Dec 2021	 <a href="#"><u>Final Paper</u></a> <a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/courses/52634/assignments/131085">           (https://absalon.instructure.com/courses/52634/assignments/131085)         </a>	forfalder 23.59