

# 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 8B.1.14

### Online Platform:

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


## Course Description

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>)

## Office Hours by Appointment

Faculty of Theology, University of Copenhagen

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

## **Textbook to be acquired by the students themselves**

- Simon Blackburn. *A Very Short Introduction to Ethics*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2021.

## **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 DIS-students**

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 on Absalon of 4-5 pages each, 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 of literature.

## **Requirements for KU-students (both Danish students and Exchange students)**

For undergraduate students (bachelor students):

Active attendance (at least attendance in 75% of the sessions documented by protocol). A final major assignment, which has a size of 24.000-28.800 characters, i.e. 10-12 pages, and based on 400-500 pages literature in agreement with the teacher. The assignments is assessed by the teacher and a grade 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: A final assignment 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). A final paper of 36.000-48.000 characters, i.e. 15-20 pages, and based on 800-1000 pages of literature in agreement with the teacher. The assignment is assessed by the teacher, and a grade 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.

### **Grading (only for DIS-students)**

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

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**Final Paper of 8-10 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	Forfalder
tors den 18. Jan 2024	 <a href="#">Session 1. Introduction: Thinking About the Brain - Existing With the Brain</a> <a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136339&amp;include_contexts=course_70616">           (https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136339&amp;include_contexts=course_70616)         </a>	13.30 til 16:00
tors den 25. Jan 2024	 <a href="#">Session 2. From the Soul to the Brain: A Historical Perspective</a> <a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136332&amp;include_contexts=course_70616">           (https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136332&amp;include_contexts=course_70616)         </a>	13.30 til 16:00
tors den 1. Feb 2024	 <a href="#">Session 3: Darwin, Evolution, and Religion</a> <a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136340&amp;include_contexts=course_70616">           (https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136340&amp;include_contexts=course_70616)         </a>	13.30 til 16:00
tors den 15. Feb 2024	 <a href="#">Session 4. Naturalism: The End of the Journey?</a> <a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136333&amp;include_contexts=course_70616">           (https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136333&amp;include_contexts=course_70616)         </a>	13.30 til 16:00
onsd den 21. Feb 2024	 <a href="#">1st Short Assignment</a> <a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/courses/70616/assignments/199783">           (https://absalon.instructure.com/courses/70616/assignments/199783)         </a>	forfalder 23.59
tors den 22. Feb 2024	 <a href="#">Session 5. Ethical Theories: Aristotle and Virtue Ethics</a> <a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136341&amp;include_contexts=course_70616">           (https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136341&amp;include_contexts=course_70616)         </a>	13.30 til 16:00
tors den 29. Feb 2024	 <a href="#">Session 6. Ethical Theories: David Hume and Sentimentalism</a>	13.30 til 16:00

Dato	Nærmere oplysninger	Forfalder
	<a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136334&amp;include_contexts=course_70616">https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136334&amp;include_contexts=course 70616</a>	
onsd den 20. Mar 2024	 <a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/courses/70616/assignments/199784">2nd Short Assignment</a> <a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/courses/70616/assignments/199784">https://absalon.instructure.com/courses/70616/assignments/199784</a>	forfalder 23.59
tors den 21. Mar 2024	 <a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136331&amp;include_contexts=course_70616">Session 7. Ethical Theories: Immanuel Kant and Deontology</a> <a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136331&amp;include_contexts=course_70616">https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136331&amp;include_contexts=course 70616</a>	13.30 til 16:00
tors den 4. Apr 2024	 <a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136335&amp;include_contexts=course_70616">Session 8. Ethical Theories: John Stuart Mill and Utilitarianism</a> <a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136335&amp;include_contexts=course_70616">https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136335&amp;include_contexts=course 70616</a>	13.30 til 16:00
tors den 11. Apr 2024	 <a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136336&amp;include_contexts=course_70616">Session 9. The Feeling Brain: Emotions, Neurons, and Rationality</a> <a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136336&amp;include_contexts=course_70616">https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136336&amp;include_contexts=course 70616</a>	13.30 til 16:00
onsd den 17. Apr 2024	 <a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/courses/70616/assignments/199785">3rd Short Assignment</a> <a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/courses/70616/assignments/199785">https://absalon.instructure.com/courses/70616/assignments/199785</a>	forfalder 23.59
tors den 25. Apr 2024	 <a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136337&amp;include_contexts=course_70616">Session 10. The Self: Reality - Problem - Illusion</a> <a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136337&amp;include_contexts=course_70616">https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136337&amp;include_contexts=course 70616</a>	13.30 til 16:00
tors den 2. Maj 2024	 <a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136338&amp;include_contexts=course_70616">Session 11. How to Live with a Bad Brain: Depression, Suffering, and Responsibility</a> <a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136338&amp;include_contexts=course_70616">https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136338&amp;include_contexts=course 70616</a>	13.30 til 16:00
tors den 9. Maj 2024	 <a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/courses/70616/assignments/199786">Final Paper</a> <a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/courses/70616/assignments/199786">https://absalon.instructure.com/courses/70616/assignments/199786</a>	forfalder 23.59
	 <a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136328&amp;include_contexts=course_70616">Session 1. Introduction: Thinking About the Brain - Existing With the Brain</a> <a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136328&amp;include_contexts=course_70616">https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136328&amp;include_contexts=course 70616</a>	
	 <a href="#">Session 10. Who Is Acting?: The Brain, the Self or the Person</a>	

Dato	Nærmere oplysninger	Forfaldet
	<p><a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136325&amp;include_contexts=course_70616">https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136325&amp;include_contexts=course 70616</a></p> <hr/>	
	<p> <a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136321&amp;include_contexts=course_70616">Session 11. How to Live with a Bad Brain: Depression, Suffering, and Responsibility</a> <a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136321&amp;include_contexts=course_70616">https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136321&amp;include_contexts=course 70616</a></p> <hr/>	
	<p> <a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136322&amp;include_contexts=course_70616">Session 12. Neuroethics: Reality, Morality, and Human Beings</a> <a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136322&amp;include_contexts=course_70616">https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136322&amp;include_contexts=course 70616</a></p> <hr/>	
	<p> <a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136330&amp;include_contexts=course_70616">Session 2. From the Soul to the Brain: A Historical Perspective</a> <a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136330&amp;include_contexts=course_70616">https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136330&amp;include_contexts=course 70616</a></p> <hr/>	
	<p> <a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136319&amp;include_contexts=course_70616">Session 3: Darwin, Evolution, and Religion</a> <a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136319&amp;include_contexts=course_70616">https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136319&amp;include_contexts=course 70616</a></p> <hr/>	
	<p> <a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136320&amp;include_contexts=course_70616">Session 4. Naturalism: The End of the Journey?</a> <a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136320&amp;include_contexts=course_70616">https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136320&amp;include_contexts=course 70616</a></p> <hr/>	
	<p> <a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136327&amp;include_contexts=course_70616">Session 5. Ethical Theories: Aristotle and Virtue Ethics</a> <a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136327&amp;include_contexts=course_70616">https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136327&amp;include_contexts=course 70616</a></p> <hr/>	
	<p> <a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136326&amp;include_contexts=course_70616">Session 6. Ethical Theories: David Hume and Sentimentalism</a> <a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136326&amp;include_contexts=course_70616">https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136326&amp;include_contexts=course 70616</a></p> <hr/>	
	<p> <a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136324&amp;include_contexts=course_70616">Session 7. Ethical Theories: Immanuel Kant and Deontology</a> <a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136324&amp;include_contexts=course_70616">https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136324&amp;include_contexts=course 70616</a></p> <hr/>	
	<p> <a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136323&amp;include_contexts=course_70616">Session 8. Ethical Theories: John Stuart Mill and</a></p>	

Dato	Nærmere oplysninger	Forfalder
	<p><b><u>Utilitarianism</u></b> (<a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136323&amp;include_contexts=course_70616">https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136323&amp;include_contexts=course 70616</a>)</p>	
	<hr/> <p> <b><u>Session 9. The Feeling Brain: Emotions, Neurons, and Rationality</u></b> (<a href="https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136329&amp;include_contexts=course_70616">https://absalon.instructure.com/calendar?event_id=136329&amp;include_contexts=course 70616</a>)</p>	