

Short Paper Assignment

Below are three possible topics for your short paper. The papers are to be double-spaced, 3 to 5 pages, *no longer* (longer papers will be rejected!). They are due by Noon on March 1 and are to be submitted as *attachments* to emails sent to papers@mechanism.ucsd.edu. Each of these topics can be addressed in light of the materials we are reading for this course. You may bring in additional material that you are familiar with, but your paper needs to reflect the readings assigned for the course. They are not to be research papers, but attempts by you to synthesize and evaluate *central* ideas in the material we are covering.

These are topics, not theses for a paper. Formulate a specific thesis and use that to guide your argument. *The thesis and resulting paper need not cover everything specified in the topic stated below.* Regardless of the topic you choose, it will be critical that you **focus** your discussion. Do not try to be inclusive; rather, be **highly selective** and explain the material you do cover a clearly and precisely as possible. Take as your reader for the paper an intelligent fellow student who does not know the material we have read or covered in this course. Accordingly, you will have to explain the key ideas and arguments. Do so in your own words. *Only quote material when the exact words in the quotation are important*—for example, you are going to criticize what is said.

1. A key theoretical idea integrating the different disciplinary contributions to cognitive psychology and science is that the mind is an information processing system that operates over representations. Does the framework of information processing over representations have the resources to explain what Brentano called intentionality? Explain what a representation is and what would be an operation over them and develop at least one clear example of how this framework is employed in one of the disciplines of cognitive science. Discuss how that example deals with the intentionality of mental processes and how Brentano might evaluate the cognitive science research.
2. Explain (one version of) one of the three main accounts of the relation of mind to body (identity theory, functionalism, eliminative materialism), show through an example how it would apply to a specific psychological phenomenon, and defend it as the best account of the relation of mind to brain. Consider one major objection to the account and answer that objection (you won't have the space to develop more than one objection and reply in sufficient detail, so pick carefully). Be thorough in explaining the objection and the answer you offer.
3. Explain the multiple realizability argument against the reduction of psychology to neuroscience, showing how it would apply to one psychological phenomenon. Make the argument seem as reasonable as possible. Describe what you take to be the most compelling objection that has been advanced to the multiple realizability argument. Evaluate whether the objection is successful or whether the claimed multiple realizability of psychological phenomena remains a compelling argument against reduction.