Phil 149
Winter 2007

Short Paper Assignment

Below are three possible topics for your short paper. The papers are to be 3 to 5 pages, double-spaced, *no longer* (longer papers will be rejected!). They are due by the time of class on March 6 and are to be submitted as *attachments* on 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 (specifically, the readings assigned for February 20, 22, and 27). 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.

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. Sometimes it will help to provide an example. These may come from our recent discussions of cognitive psychology and cognitive neuroscience. 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. Take (one version of) one of the three main accounts of mind-body relation (identity theory, functionalism, eliminative materialism) and develop and defend it as the best account in the context of contemporary psychology and cognitive science. Consider one major objection to the position and answer that objection (you won't have the space to develop more than one in sufficient detail, so pick carefully).

2. Explain the multiple realizability argument against the reduction of psychology to neuroscience. Make the argument seem as compelling 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 multiple realizability argument survives.

3. Explain and evaluate the language of thought hypothesis. What is meant by a language of thought? What are the most compelling arguments for and against there being a language of thought? You will probably want to restrict yourself to one argument for and one against, and develop those two arguments thoroughly.