

Modern Theories of Mind: From Austen to A.I.

(ILA791 & WS585 & CL751)

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The goal of this course is to equip students with a clearer understanding, both historically and methodologically, of several different ways in which embodied mental life has been represented, described, and analyzed in the modern era. The course will canvass a variety of disciplines and genres ranging from literary fiction (Jane Austen, Mary Shelley, Jack London) to evolutionary theory (Charles Darwin), psychology, philosophy (William James, Pierre Janet) and AI, as well as recent studies of the education of such celebrated figures as the two blind-and-deaf women Helen Keller and Laura Bridgman. Theory of mind is a domain of study most closely associated with the work of Anglo-American analytic philosophy. The topics and readings in this course bring other traditions of mind to the fore; setting the stage for theories of mind that are more expansively embodied, that consider mind beyond the limits of cognition or adulthood or human flesh, and that take culture and interpersonal relatedness to be a necessary part of the formation of mind.