It is sometimes thought that human cognition consists in functions analogous to those performed by computers. This analogy is common in ordinary talk about the extraordinary capacity of "the brain" to at once perceive, think, plan motor actions including speech, etc. The brain, in this model, is understood as a kind of remarkably complex central processor. This computer analogy is supported both by a long tradition in philosophy and by a conceptual framework commonly deployed by psychologists, cognitive scientists, philosophers, and people working in artificial intelligence. The basic assumption in this framework is that the brain somehow acquires and stores representations of the external world upon which it then performs computational functions. However, this view of the
mind has been challenged by a number of thinkers and researchers since the beginning of the 20th century. Increasingly these challenges are making themselves felt in the fields of psychology and cognitive science, giving rise to new research programs such as "ecological psychology," "embodied cognition," "situated cognition" and the "enactive" theory of mind. The common theme in these challenges is an insistence on the importance of the body as the matrix of intelligence and meaning. It is, these challengers suggest, insofar as we move, form habits and develop skills that we begin to make sense of our environments and it is this active process of making bodily sense of the world that constitutes the most basic forms of mental life. It is bodily behavior rather than representations that form the basis of cognition. The mind then is not so much something inhering in the brain as it is a structure linking the body of an organism with its environment. This challenge to the traditional model of cognition has led to new ways of thinking about the role of environments, language and our relations with others in shaping our experience. In this course we will examine some developments in the field of embodied cognition as reported by Alva Noë in a 2009 book, and we will examine a seminal work in 20th century philosophy, Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*, a work that has remained a fundamental text for those who, in recent years, have championed the idea of "the embodied mind."

**Course Resources**

Course Website:
[Blackboard](http://www.courses.mtu.edu)

Required Course Texts (available at the bookstore):


There will also be several articles available on Blackboard.
Grading Scheme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 short paper (on an assigned question)</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 (out of 5) in-class quizzes</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class participation/discussion</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research paper proposal and outline</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Paper</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Assignments:

**Short papers:** I will assign a question about one of the texts and you will provide an answer in 5 double-spaced pages. To answer this question effectively you will need to be engaging with and reflecting upon the central themes of the text indicated in the question. You will not need to consult secondary sources. Your short paper must include a “works cited” page in which you provide a proper bibliographic reference (using MLA style) for the text that you are asked to discuss. Remember to include your name, the course number, and the assignment due date on the first page (or title page). Pages must be numbered and stapled prior to submission.

**In-class quizzes:** In a philosophy class it is of the utmost importance that you keep up with the readings. There will be five very short surprise quizzes (lasting 15 minutes) designed simply to evaluate your familiarity with the content of the readings. Only the best three of these test results will be counted toward your final grade. You do not need to go out of your way to study for these texts, but you should come to each class prepared to answer a few simple questions about the day’s readings.

**Class participation/tutorial discussion:** Students in this course are strongly encouraged to come to each class prepared to ask questions about the readings. Your active participation in these discussions will count toward your final grade in the course.

**Presentation:** Each student in the class will be assigned a secondary reading (one journal article) on a topic relative to embodied cognition (you may be involved in selecting a topic that is of particular interest to you). We will arrange a meeting no later than one week prior to your presentation to discuss the article and then you will be expected offer a 20 minute presentation on article to the class, explaining the argument or the nature of the research and fielding questions from the class.

**Research Paper:** Each student in the class will write a term paper exploring some aspect of embodied cognition. You will be expected to submit a proposal including a proposed bibliography and thesis. You will also be expected to submit an outline for your paper.

**Final Exam:** There will be a one hour final exam during the exam period.

Course Policies

Academic integrity is essential to a student’s education. Plagiarism, Cheating, Fabrication and Facilitating Academic Dishonesty are offences that will not be tolerated. Plagiarism—loosely
defined as the presentation of the work of another author as if it were your own—will not be tolerated. If you are unclear about how to cite your sources properly, you are urged to discuss the matter with the instructor before submitting an assignment. Academic regulations and procedures are governed by University policy. Academic dishonesty cases will be handled in accordance with the University policy. SEE http://www.mtu.edu/dean/conduct/policy/academic-integrity/. If you have questions about plagiarism that are not resolved after reading the policy, ask me for help.

Class Attendance is very important. Three excused or unexcused absences are permitted; it is your responsibility to notify the instructor if you cannot be in class. More than three unexcused absences can result in a lowering of the final course grade, and additional unexcused absences may result in a grade of F being recorded for the entire course. See http://www.mtu.edu/dean/conduct/policy/attendance/ for more information.

Late Policy: All papers and assignments must be submitted in hard copy at the beginning of class on the day that they are due. Papers submitted as email attachments will not be graded except in cases where prior arrangements have been made. Late papers will be reduced 10% of the assignment grade for each week, or part thereof, of lateness, up to 30%.

Disabilities

If you have a disability that could affect your performance in this class or that requires an accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act, please see me as soon as possible so that we can make appropriate arrangements. The Affirmative Action Office has asked that you be made aware of the following:

Michigan Tech complies with all federal and state laws and regulations regarding discrimination, including the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. If you have a disability and need a reasonable accommodation for equal access to education or services at Michigan Tech, please call the Dean of Students Office, at 487-2212. For other concerns about discrimination, you may contact your advisor, department head or the Affirmative Action Office, at 487-3310. Affirmative Action: http://www.admin.mtu.edu/aaod/ Disability Services: http://www.admin.mtu.edu/urcl/studenthandbook/student_services.html#disability


Tentative Schedule of Readings and Assignments

Week 1:
M: Jan 9: Introduction
W: Jan 11: Noë, pp. xi-24
F: Jan 13: (cont’d)

Week 2:
W: Jan 18: Descartes, *Meditations 1&2* (blackboard)
F: Jan 20: Russon, from *Human Experience* (blackboard)

**Week 3:**
M: Jan 23: Merleau-Ponty, pp. 3-29
W: Jan 25: (cont’d)
F: Jan 27: (cont’d)

**Week 4:**
M: Jan 30: Merleau-Ponty, pp. 30-74
W: Feb 1: **[short paper assigned]**
F: Feb 3:

**Week 5:**
W: Feb 6: Merleau-Ponty pp. 77-111
F: Feb 8

**Week 6:**
M: Feb 13: Merleau-Ponty, pp. 112-170
W: Feb 15: **[short paper due—in class]**
F: Feb 17:

**Week 7:**
W: Feb 22:
F: Feb 24: **Presentations**

**Week 8:**
M: Feb 27: Noë, pp. 25-66 **[paper proposals due—in class]**
W: Feb 29
F: March 2: **Presentations**

**March 3-11: BREAK**

**Week 9:**
M: March 12: Noë, pp. 67-128

W: March 14:

F: March 16: Presentations

Week 10:
M: March 19: Dreyfus, "Intelligence Without Representation" (blackboard)

W: March 21:

F: March 23: Gallagher, "Lived Body and Environment" [blackboard]

Week 11:
M: March 26: Noë, pp. 129-147 and Presentations

W: March 28: Noë pp. 149-169 [paper outlines due—in class]

F: March 30: Presentations

Week 12:
M: April 2: Noë, pp. 171-186

W: April 4:

F: April 6: Presentations

Week 13:
M: April 9: readings TBA

W: April 11:

F: April 13: Presentations

Week 14:
M: April 16: Readings TBA

W: April 18: [term papers due—in class]

F: April 20:

Final Exam—date to be announced

This syllabus may be changed during the term to accommodate the needs of either the students or the professor.