

Hermes Suen: The Nature of the Mind: Perspectives From Computers, Meditation & Psychedelics

Would you recommend this study group to others? (Yes/Maybe/No) 13/7/2

If you have any comments about the study group leader's choice of readings, handouts, films (etc.), please provide them here:

Excellent selection of readings and videos. The selection demonstrated Hermes' impressive knowledge of the course material.

All the readings, handouts, films, etc. were very well selected and relevant.

I thought that the choice of readings and videos was good and was at an appropriate scale. It might have seemed like a lot of reading except for the fact that I was only enrolled in one study group in May. I like it when the courses push me a bit.

I enjoyed the class, Hermes was very well prepared. My weak link is in philosophy--my understanding of the brain and neurochemistry is pretty good. The Youtube links were good, some better than others. The philosophical readings were hard to read or skim or to get interested in, since I can't even recall what Aristotelian or ontological means... Perhaps some additional suggestions for basic neurobiology for those who need it would be good. Music suggestions and other resources for psychedelic experiences and effects would be nice.

Very interesting readings

Timing proved to be an issue with me. Family got in the way. I should have foreseen that. The content was pretty heady.

The presentation was focused more on philosophical ideas and theories which didn't particularly address my interests. Some of the videos such as the TED talk on a neuroscientist's actual experience of brain hemispheres functioning while having a cerebral hemorrhage, was interesting and engaging.

Readings/films were sometimes good and other times way too esoteric.

Readings were dense and a couple were difficult to get through.

This is a philosophy study group that requires cross-discipline readings. Some of the reading was abstract and dense, as scholarly papers tend to be. I appreciate the instructor's intellectual courage and belief that we could all handle such a challenging subject, taken from a scholarly and philosophical POV.

Overall, I found this to be a particularly challenging topic, and some of the readings and videos were pretty heavy going. However, I suspect that any attempt to use fewer, lighter background materials would have failed to do the topic justice.

Readings quite esoteric and hard to follow unless one has strong background in philosophy and philosophers. I found it difficult to follow as a person with limited background in Phil.

i felt that the leader Hermes Suen had well thought out, meaningful, and broad approaches to the subject and generously included everyone involved

Readings were a bit difficult and much too long, but Hermes gave excellent overviews of the arguments in his slides and in person. He has a knack for boiling down complex positions and making them comprehensible to the layperson while still retaining their depth and interest for us who are more well-versed in philosophy

The material was A little to difficult

The leader was sincere and loved the topics. However, for me the readings were very dense and too many for each session.

Hermes was excellent: knowledgeable, friendly, inclusive, and able to keep a crowd much older than him in check when necessary! His own lecture material was very interesting. I would suggest, though, that he doesn't have to read his own slides word by word.

The readings were dense - but my sense at the end was that they were well selected as starting points for discussion. The videos were interesting, but more superficial. They got me thinking about why these videos were available on the internet at all. (TED talks, Google talks; is someone paying these speakers? are they self-promoting? are they talking to other experts in their field, or are they talking to a general audience?) If we had had more time, I would have asked Hermes why he chose them.

I thought the articles and videos were all excellent choices. While they were more difficult than most other Osher classes, they all raised extremely interesting topics, which could be gleaned without needing a full understanding of the piece.

Readings/videos were relevant and introduced key issues in the field. A couple were seminal which I found a useful experience.

If you had the necessary background, the choice would have been good. But, for me, they were too many and too difficult.

All the material (powerpoint, handouts, videos) was relevant and made for good, if difficult, readings. Nothing like a challenge. He had complete mastery of Zoom and of his material. Excellent SGL, and excellent material.

Please provide any other thoughts you would like to share about this study group.

Hermes was very impressive, not only in his knowledge of the course material, but also in his ability to engage the members of the group in discussion.

Hermes was on top of the material, very personable, and facilitated in a masterful fashion the discussion.

My bias is towards more personal stories of our experiences and understanding of this stuff. Time was often limited, we went over time several times--which is fine with ME, I'm in no rush. There was one British woman who was a dancer who would give five minute or longer talks about how dance blah blah something blah blah...I know that it's tough to politely tell someone (regardless of your age) to shut up and get to the point---but perhaps a private email, or a reminder to EVERYONE to "please get to your point quickly, there are lots of people here" would be a good way to start each talk. Having given lots of classes, I know that there are those who monopolize time, and many who rarely speak. But she took up about 10 minutes per class on...whatever she prattled on about. I don't understand the philosophy parts, but enjoyed the AI, robots, and psychedelic issues. Perhaps do a

bit more on the chemistry of psychedelics?? and how they work, and what they do to modify perception? Thank you!

Very thoughtful, well-versed in subject, responsive to group ?s

It was too philosophically and academically oriented and more appropriate in a philosophy class.

At times course was good. However, many times discussions were just too theoretical.

Leader was open to our thoughts and discussion. After we said that the readings for the first session were dense, he adjusted future readings and used several videos.

It wasn't easy to get through but there was a lot to talk about and listen to. I'd advise the instructor to mix in some readings that are less scholarly that might be more fun to read. I applaud the instructor and the study group design for its ambition, but I think it's a very big and broad subject for 4 sessions.

The topic fascinates me.

Great class! Not just the topic which I love, but also the way in which Hermes conducted it. He generated good discussion and was able to explore many sides of these difficult issues, playing devil's advocate when necessary, and bringing out the value in everyone's contributions. One class member in particular started to dominate the discussions from the get-go and threatened to drive the discussion, and the course, to favor her point of view, but Hermes handled her well and was able to generate discussion from the whole class and brought out the value in all the different points of view. Hermes could be a philosophy professor, but I'm sure working on AI is much more lucrative, so maybe when he retires... ;-) But seriously if he ever wanted to teach another course at OSHER, I would definitely take it!

I was disappointed when slides were presented with lengthy quotes, and then the leader read them. It was difficult for me to stay attuned. I would definitely want to try again, with readings and sessions shortened.

The group in this class were mostly knowledgeable and verbose! Many got quite carried away by the sound of their own voices, and Hermes was usually able to stem them, but not always. I was new to this topic, and felt a bit intimidated by the in group, many of whom knew each other. My hat is off to Hermes' respectful but effective crowd control!

Enjoyed it - but four sessions were insufficient for this subject. Would like to try it again for a full 8 weeks. The leader encouraged discussion, but I feel that Zoom has its limitations* with respect to discussion in an OLLI-size group; it will be lovely when we can meet again in a classroom. *What limitations, you ask? It is almost impossible to cue someone who is rambling to stop talking. And conversely, it is difficult to pick up a thread from someone who has just said something quite interesting and ask them to expand on it before the screen slips away to someone who is ready to change the subject. Maybe we will get better at this if it goes on, but I hope we don't have to.

Hermes did a great job explaining some very difficult concepts. He always encouraged questions and discussion, and I was especially impressed with his ability to engage with questions from people at very different levels of familiarity with the materials and from very different professional backgrounds. I hope he'll take up some related topics and offer more courses in the future.

I enjoyed this course and thought the instructor did an excellent job--particularly when it came to actually hearing what people were asking/saying and responding in a directed and positive fashion. However, it took a session or 2 for me to get my feet under me in this course. If the instructor did such a course again, I might suggest a little more structured approach in the first session--for example, a little history, major questions and areas of conflict in the field, definitions --stuff of that sort--to provide background and context. Then each subsequent session could be focused on

exploring one or two aspects of the bigger picture (as was done from the beginning this time around). Overall, however, very worthwhile. Thank you.

It was way over my head.

Hermes was personable and in complete control of his subject. Perhaps he tried to cover too much material in four sessions. This topic is a lifetime pursuit of many academics, and he tried to cover a lot. Kudos to him and his energy. And thanks to Tufts Olli for finding him...!