

Hello Consciousness College Colloquium students,

I hope you've been having a fine summer ... but Willamette, college life, and colloquium loom near!

I will be your academic advisor and College Colloquium instructor: you may call me Fritz. (In general, you should address college professors as "Professor So-and-So" unless or until they tell you otherwise: preferences differ, but I fall on the less formal end of the spectrum here at Willamette.)

In order to get into the mood for the coming semester, I have been prompted to send you a bit of "summer homework" (as if you didn't have enough to do with packing, reassuring parents, saying fond farewells to high school friends, ...). But in any case, here it is: I attach with this email a PDF file holding a paper by Daniel Dennett. Please read the paper and takes some informal notes to record your reactions and thoughts, then bring these notes to our first-day class. (I won't be collecting them, but you may want to refer to them in discussion.)

Try to be an "active reader", i.e., spend a bit of time to inform yourself a little further about the reading: who is this Dennett guy? Why should we care what he thinks? Look at few definitions from elsewhere (dictionaries, etc.) of what consciousness is. Can you distinguish it from near relatives, conceptually? (For example, comparing apples to oranges: they are both roughly spherical, hand-sized, typically seeded fruits, also with skin and pulp. But they taste different, and oranges are segmented, and have thicker skin. You know the drill.) In the case of consciousness, even picking some near relatives for comparison & contrast can be a fulfilling exercise.

OK, I am going to get back to cleaning my basement (relatives coming to see the eclipse, gotta get that house looking nice!). I look forward to meeting you all and spending a fun semester in discussion about a wide-ranging variety of topics. See you in a couple of weeks!

— Fritz (Ruehr)

PS: If there is some problem with the attachment, you can find the PDF file on the web at: the following address:

<https://ase.tufts.edu/cogstud/dennett/papers/explainingmagic.pdf>

(Special thanks to Tufts University for providing a copy of the paper.)