

An introduction to FutureLearn comments

Last updated: 05 Oct 15 by David Thair

The best way for you to get a feel for the commenting system on FutureLearn is to try it for yourself. Just sign up to **any course currently running** and try leaving a comment! Comments work in the same way for educators and learners.

This walkthrough will go into more detail about each feature of the FutureLearn commenting system.

Comments on article, video, and audio steps

The picture below shows a comments button on an Article Step. Comments on article, video and audio steps are hidden by default until the button is pressed.



Representations of the mind

Looking at how a mind has been visualised is another way to introduce the topic of this course. How have depictions of the mind resonated with your understanding of what a mind is?

Many of the images used in this course including the above image, the [course trailer](#), logo and activity icons are photographs of an [artwork installation](#) by Professor Pippa Skotnes.


This installation, completed in 2013, is housed in the entrance hall to the Department of Psychology at the University of Cape Town and was inspired by psychologists' interest in understanding the mind. It comprises the following sections:



The comments panel

Revealed comments will appear to the side of the step on wide screens.

1.3



'Breath' by Pippa Skotnes © University of Cape Town CC-BY-NC

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COMMENTS

Everyone | Following | Most liked | My comments

David Thair

Leave a comment... (plain text only, links will be auto-linked)

Post 0/1200

getsemany marinou [Follow](#) 2 hours

I believe that the mind and the body work together in order to provide a meaningful life for us. If either one has a problem, then the quality of life is lacking in some way. As the ancient Greeks have said many centuries ago, "A healthy mind in a healthy body".

[Like](#) • [Reply](#)

manjeet Saggu [Follow](#) 13 hours

To me ,mind and brain are inter related, brain being the physical form of us humans while mind is the consciousness. I did one of the courses "mind is flat" and realised that our minds change ,according to the situations we are in .

[Like](#) • [Reply](#)

Yusani Malla [Follow](#) 22 hours

Very difficult question but to me a mind is who we are. It is who each individual person is, what sets us apart from the next person, the body just being a "vessel" that houses the mind.

[Like](#) • [Reply](#)

Levinia Crawford-Browne [Follow](#) 26 MAY

I think Salvador Dali was close to depicting a mind in his surrealist art. Watches that seemed to melt, etc. We can imagine anything - solid forms don't have to be solid, pigs can fly, etc. The imagination is endless - and that in itself is fascinating. Memory is also intertwined - that yesterday is past but not forgotten. Human beings are incredible creatures!

[Like](#) 1 • [Reply](#)

On smaller screens, such as mobile, the comments will appear below the step, in a manner that will feel familiar to social media users. This means that comments are easy to scroll through whichever device or size of screen you use. By providing comments in context, rather than a separate forum, it's clear to learners where to find relevant conversation.

Discussion Steps

Comments are **visible by default** on discussions steps, and they are always **below** the body of the step.

What is consciousness?

Consciousness is a term used across several different disciplines - Philosophy, Psychology, artificial intelligence and of course in everyday conversation. It is used metaphorically in contexts such as 'people need to be more environmentally and socially conscious'. This week we look at consciousness from a neuroscientific perspective.

What do *you* understand by the term consciousness. What is the opposite of consciousness? Or are there degrees of consciousness?

Post your comments in the discussion area. Feel free to respond to other learners' comments and 'like' those that resonate with you.


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[+ \(569\) Join the discussion](#) [Mark as complete](#)

← PREVIOUS NEXT →

DISCUSSION


[Everyone](#) | [Following](#) | [Most liked](#) | [My comments](#)



David Thair

Leave a comment... (plain text only, links will be auto-linked)


Post 0/1200



Richard Gaze [Follow](#) 39 minutes

Do I need a Theory of Mind to be able to define consciousness and un/non consciousness? I could be unconscious or asleep and a noise could wake me. Does that mean that part of my consciousness is actually operating when I am to all apparently unconscious? Is it possible to have a mind and be unconscious?


[Like](#) • [Reply](#) 📌



Siyanda Jack [Follow](#) 42 minutes

One person made an example of driving a manual car, when you are still learning how to drive a manual car you are very conscious of every step you must make for the car to move in a certain direction. As you get used to driving the car there are things that you start doing without your mind being responsive to it. In this case your mind is operating at certain degrees of consciousness and unconsciousness.

[Like](#) • [Reply](#) 📌



Charmaine van der Merwe [Follow](#) 53 minutes

A state of awareness

[Like](#) • [Reply](#) 📌

Comments on most steps are an optional activity, so Discussion steps should be used when you specifically want learners to contribute their thoughts and have a conversation. Taking part is not mandatory, but learners should be expected to spend more time reading and contributing comments to Discussion steps, so you might wish to focus more of your attention to these areas too.

Following

 PROFILE



Joshua Martin (Mentor)

Graduate student from the University of Cape Town and mentor for "What Is A Mind?". Research interests: sleep and dreaming, drugs and addiction, consciousness, and the philosophy of mind.

LOCATION CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA



COURSES

What is a Mind?

Unfollow

You can follow another user by pressing the 'follow' button on their profile...

...and also next to any of their comments:



Jose Manuel Aleman Palacios

Follow

20 MAY

Hi everybody.

I am José Alemán, sorry for entering so late to the course, I just found out about this website and surfing through the courses this one caught my attention completely. I've read some of your presentations and the majority are doctors and psychologist, which is great as my dream career is psychology, I expect to learn a lot from all of you. Me, on the contrary, studied modern languages and currently I'm working as a teacher.

Why this course? because every time that I ask the question it shakes my foundations, so simple to say , what is a mind? when in reality the complexity implied astonishes me, so many perspectives to see it, medical, artistic, psychological, linguistic, mathematical. Although, the main reason for me being here is that I don't understand my own mind, and as Lao Tzu says "mastering other is strength, mastering yourself is true power"; I believe understanding the mind would be the first step to achieve that.

Like 2



Joshua Martín (Mentor)

Unfollow

21 MAY

Hi Jose, no need to apologise for signing-up late. It shouldn't take you too long to catch up to the second week of material. Hope you enjoy the course!

Like



Important: when you follow someone, they are notified by email.

As an educator you may get a lot of followers, and therefore a lot of email notifications! You can turn off these notifications under 'Email Settings' and 'Email me when I have a new follower' on your [settings page](#).

Filter by following

Once you are following some people, you can filter comments on steps so that you see only the conversations those people have been involved with. In this example, only conversations that Joshua Martin has posted in are displayed:

DISCUSSION

Everyone | **Following** | Most liked | My comments



David Thair

Leave a comment... (plain text only, links will be auto-linked)

Post

0/1200



Rosalind Scott-Gibb

Follow 12 MAY

Forgive me if I am being too simplistic if I define the mind as 'the spirit of the brain' . With this simple definition, we can explain the differences between the human brain and the computer. My definition would include plants and animals. Please comment. (edited)

Like 2



Joshua Martin (Mentor)

Unfollow 16 MAY

Hi Rosalind! There's no need to apologise. Everyone has differing and interesting perspectives of the mind that have value in this discussion :).

A couple of questions regarding your answer: When you mean your definition would include animals and plants, do you mean that they have minds too? Your definition of the mind as "the spirit of the brain" seems to be at odds with including plants and many animals (e.g. jellyfish) that do not have a brain. Could you clarify this?

Like



Rosalind Scott-Gibb

Follow 17 MAY

Does a jellyfish not have feelings? I am very interested in the research regarding transplanted organs which implies that a liver, heart or lungs pass on information from the donor including feelings. Please comment.

Like



Reply

This is extremely useful for learners to make sense of the large numbers of comments available on most steps. The idea is they can build their own 'network' of people they find interesting. It's also a way for them to easily find the comments that educators make, which is why we recommend that you link to your profiles during the introduction to the course.

Filter by most liked

Filtering by 'most liked' is one of the most important tools for you as an educator...

DISCUSSION

Everyone | Following | **Most liked** | My comments



David Thair

Leave a comment... (plain text only, links will be auto-linked)

Post

0/1200



Julie Clark

Follow 11 MAY

Hi, I'm from the UK and have always had an interest in the mind, our 'subconscious', and the philosophical and psychological questions relating to it.

I am incredibly lucky to have survived a brain haemorrhage almost two years ago now, caused by a ruptured aneurysm, which is now coiled.

I feel fortunate enough to still feel or think mostly like my pre-haemorrhage self, with my 'mind' more or less the same, I think, but I know this is not always the case.

I am very grateful for the skill, knowledge and monitoring I received for the care of my medical 'brain' functionality, and it led me to question how it impacts 'the mind', which is so much more than the brain.

I look forward to exploring the questions surrounding this and more, and gaining an understanding into this fascinating area. (edited)

Like 25



Sarah J Irvine

Follow 11 MAY

Good to hear that you are in recovery. I am entering my 3rd year of recovery from a significant brain injury. During my recovery I said many times to my consultants "I don't think I think", so I suppose I have to ask myself what made me think I that I didn't think. I joined this course to see if I could make sense of my mind.

Like 8



...as by using this filter you can see the most-liked individual comments (see above).

These might be:

- Thoughtful or insightful individual comments that the community can relate to
- Good or interesting questions that may still need answering
- Really good answers to questions
- Really good rebuttals to bad questions or nasty comments


'Most liked' will also show you threads of comments that have a lot of likes between them. So while one individual comment might not have attracted a lot of likes, there might be a good number if likes spread between replies in an interesting conversation.

Filter by my comments

The final filter, 'my comments' works in a similar way to 'following', but instead only shows the conversations you have been involved in. This is particularly useful if you have been interacting with lots of learners and wish to find a comment you previously left on a step.

COMMENTS


Everyone | Following | Most liked | **My comments**



David Thair

Leave a comment... (plain text only, links will be auto-linked)

Post 0/1200




Philip Missen Follow 29 MAR

I loathe added value - it usually means the supplier has done something I don't want, and then charged me more for a product which has bells and whistles I don't want. Pre prepared veg in a supermarket and 9 tenths of what microsoft get up to are good examples.

I'm not sure it actually works as well as he suggests - more that there isn't a decent alternative.

It also explains why I've hung on to my old coffee machine and kept well clear of the capsules. It is almost as if we want to be suckered in - I wonder if we do?

Like 🚩




David Thair 30 MAR

I think we do, sometimes at least. The 'added value' helps us to tell the story to *ourselves* of why we wanted something, to justify the cost.

For example in the field of technology where people pay over the odds for new gadgets which are inevitably worse quality and more expensive than the successive models, so that they can maintain the narrative that they are 'early adopters'.

I think it's lucky I don't drink coffee...

Like • Edit 🚩



Elisabeth Chown Follow 03 APR

I can think of all the kitchen gadgets I have bought to make tasks 'easier' and have disposed of them as a waste of time and far too much trouble.

I mean...why would you spend ages assembling something, using it then taking the 500 pieces apart to attempt to wash all the inaccessible places when a fork would do?

Like 1 🚩

Reply

The activity feed

The Activity Feed tab gives you an overview of **all** the most recent comments on a course. This is great for getting a snapshot of what's happening on your course right now, or has happened since you last logged in, but is not recommended as the primary point of interaction with your learners.



Everyone | Following



Annette Fawcett-Jones replied to Martin Harris
THE ANATOMY OF CONSCIOUSNESS VIDEO

Follow 13s

I agree as there are two many films now which also say that one day in our future our servents or companions will be robots on a emotional level of communication but they won't have the brain vertebrate factor that is our switch on switch off model or at least not for a long time.

[Reply](#)



Anne Horton-Smith replied to Anne Horton-Smith
BROADER DEBATES AROUND CONSCIOUSNESS ARTICLE

Follow 6m

Hi Sean,
I'm afraid you will have to debate this with a particle physicist - I'm just reporting what the current thinking is, as far as I can gather. I would be very grateful if there are any physicists on this course who would confirm or correct my understanding of quantum theory in this particular respect.
P.S. Just another thought of mine for you to...

[Reply](#)



Lisa Greenstein replied to Johanna Truijens
WHAT IS EMOTION? ARTICLE

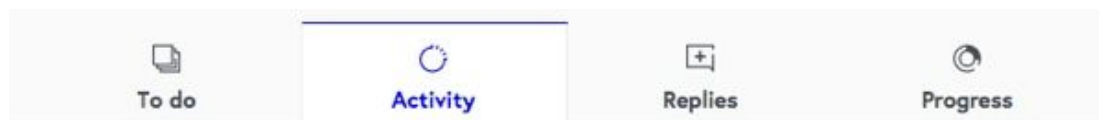
Follow 6m

Mixed emotions seem to me a set of multiple responses to different pull/push factors that are simultaneously impacting on one's feelings.

[Reply](#)

The activity feed – filter by following

By filtering the activity feed by 'Following', you can see the most recent comments left by only the people you are following. For learners this is the easiest way to keep up with friends, family or colleagues who might be taking a course with them, as well as to make sure they don't miss out on comments being left by educators.



Everyone | **Following**



Joshua Martin (Mentor) replied to Ian Roxburgh
BROADER DEBATES AROUND CONSCIOUSNESS ARTICLE

Unfollow 20h

Nice point, Ian. I think its plausible that the Hard Problem is one that is beyond our grasp. You may be interested in a British philosopher by the name of Colin McGinn and the idea of "cognitive closure" that would defend such a position.

Here's some further reading for you (and anyone else) that is interested:

(For more reading on the Hard Problem and...

[Reply](#)



Joshua Martin (Mentor) replied to Nancy Lane
WHAT CONSCIOUSNESS IS FOR VIDEO

Unfollow 20h

Thanks for the links to the videos, Nancy :).

[Reply](#)



Joshua Martin (Mentor) replied to Frank Cottingham
ASK MARK - WEEK 2 ARTICLE

Unfollow 21 MAY

Hi Frank, one of the other mentors gave an answer to this question last week. I hope it sheds some light on your query. I've linked the response below:

https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/what-is-a-mind/steps/35633?page=8#comment_5025819

[Reply](#)

Replies

Use the 'replies' tab to keep up to date with recent replies to your comments. The comments that have received the most recent replies will be listed at the top, and clicking on 'view conversation' will take you straight to the relevant thread.



2.4 WEIGHT AND DEPTH (11:03) VIDEO

about 1 year since the last reply to your reply:
Because perhaps there is nothing but context?

[View conversation](#)

1.13 FINANCIAL DECISIONS DISCUSSION

about 1 year since the last reply to your reply:
It's an area that is lucky to have plenty of data available. And don't forget, this course is from Warwick Business School!

[View conversation](#)

2.2 WEEK 1 ROUND-UP VIDEO

about 1 year since the last reply to your reply:
This is exactly what I'm interested in Dominique, and why I'm taking the course! I suspected there would be parallels.

[View conversation](#)

1.11 INTERVIEW WITH RORY SUTHERLAND (23:53) VIDEO

about 1 year since the last reply to your reply:
I think we do, sometimes at least. The 'added value' helps us to tell the story to *ourselves* of why we wanted something, to justify...

[View conversation](#)

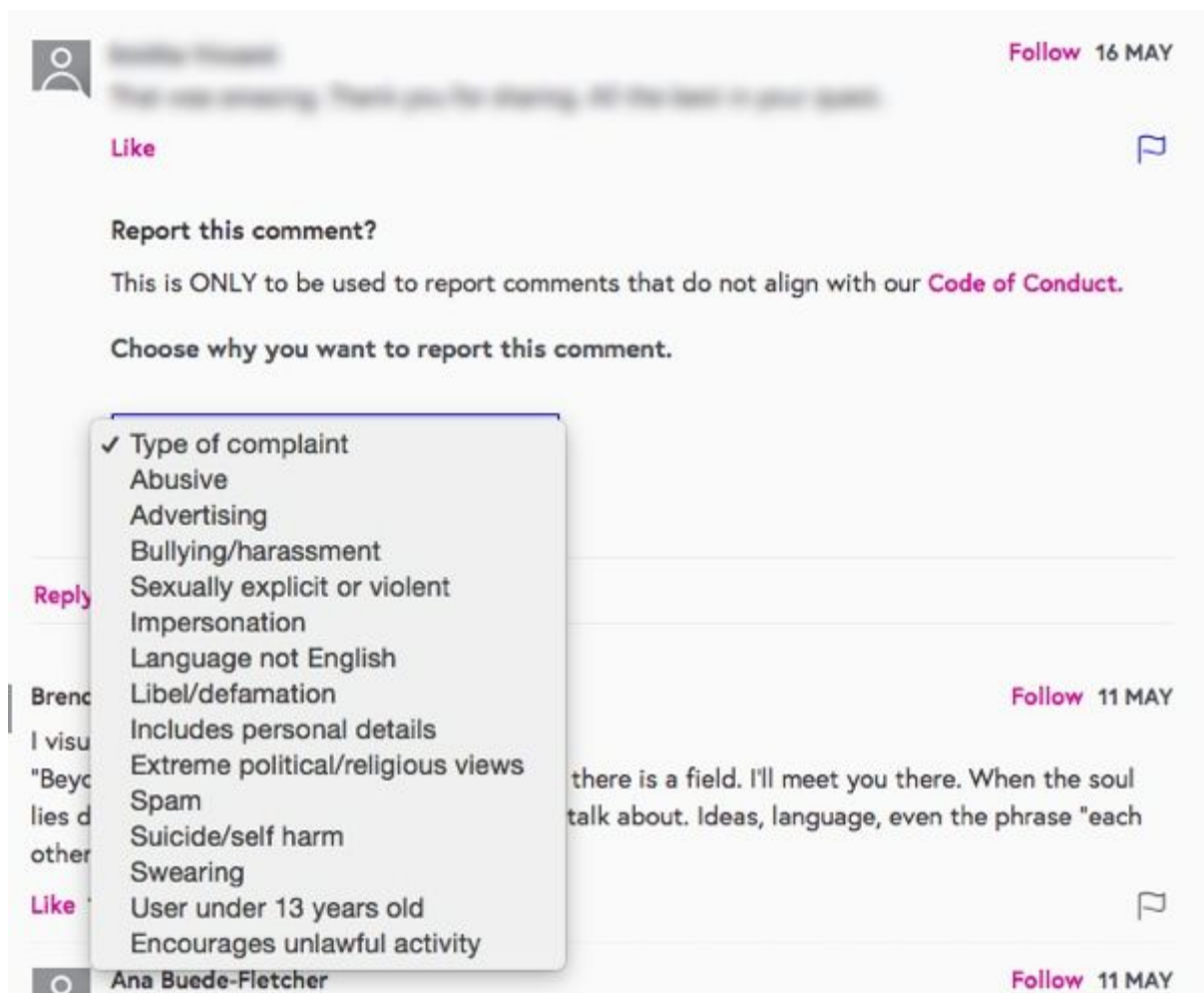
You will also receive email notifications to tell you when you have new replies. To avoid overwhelming you with emails you will receive **at most one email per day (per course)**. So if you have been involved in lots of conversations, don't wait to get the email before checking your replies tab!

Moderation – reporting comments

Any comment can be reported by any user of FutureLearn. All you need to do is press the flag button on the comment.



A drop-down menu then appears, where you are prompted to choose the reason why you are reporting the comment:



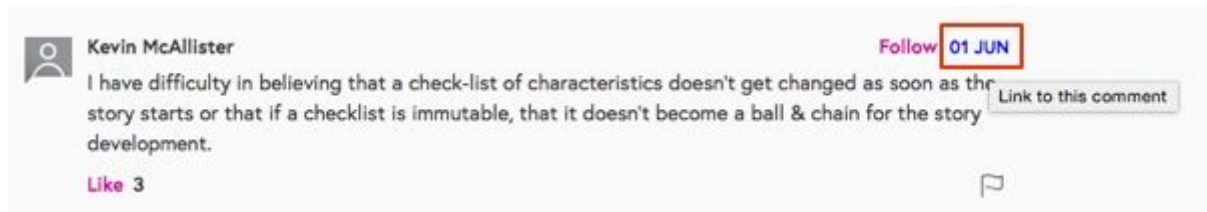
After reporting a comment, the comment remains visible until it has been reviewed by a FutureLearn moderator. If the moderator finds that the comment broke the FutureLearn [Code of Conduct](#), the comment is removed, and the user is automatically notified by email that their comment has been hidden.

Note: it is also possible to report user profiles in the same manner, via the flag button on their profile page. Use this to report a problem with a user's picture, username or profile information.

Because this system is reactive, if you are uncertain about a comment, it's better for you to report it and let a moderator decide what to do, than to leave it up and leave it to chance. You can also email david.thair@futurelearn.com or moderators@futurelearn.com for help if there's anything you are concerned about.

Getting the 'permalink' to a comment

In order to get a direct URL to a specific comment, use the following technique. Right-click or ctrl-click (with a mouse) or long-press (on a touch screen device) the timestamp of the comment you wish to link to. The timestamp will be either the date, or for more recent comments, the relative time a comment was posted:



Then copy the URL (e.g. 'copy link address') from the menu. When you paste the URL, it should look something like:

<https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/start-writing-fiction/3/comments/5540841>

This URL can then be used in a number of ways:

- To keep a record of particular comments
- To share a comment internally amongst your team
- To include in course notices
- In other comments on the course, for example to point a learner to a related conversation

The URL will take the user directly to the specific comment, 'jumping' to the correct one even in the middle of a long conversation.

You might notice that the URL changes in your address bar once you visit it, e.g.

https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/start-writing-fiction/3/steps/28712?page=7#comment_5540841

This is the URL you will normally see in your browser when looking at a particular comment. However, these URLs are not permanent as the number of comments on a page will increase over time and eventually the URL will not point to the same comment!

So you should always use the above technique to get the link to a particular comment.

Other things to know about comments

Searching comments for keywords

It isn't currently possible to search all of the comment on a course via the course interface. However, if you do wish to search for certain keywords, your project lead can download all of the comments from your course in CSV format from the course stats dashboard. This data is updated once a day.

All communication is visible to other users

All comments on FutureLearn are visible to other users on the same course and there is no 'private messaging' facility. Please speak to FutureLearn if you have concerns about the behaviour of a particular learner or if you wish to contact them.

Can comments be turned off for certain steps?

No, comments are integral to FutureLearn's principles of social learning and are hard-coded into the service.

What happens to comments after the end of a course run?

Learners can continue to comment on a course indefinitely after a course run as officially 'ended'. However, normally the number of learners continue to do so drops dramatically around a week after the course has ended. A small number of learners may continue to access the course for days, weeks or even months after the course has ended as they catch up in their own time. Partners are not expected to monitor their courses indefinitely, and the standard moderation system remains in place.