The Causal Exclusion Argument is an argument for the conclusion that many mental events are identical to physical events:

(1) Some mental events cause physical events*
(2) No non-physical event can cause a physical event.**

(C) Some mental events are physical events***

* The word ‘event’ here is used more or less interchangeably with ‘state’, and ‘property’.
** This is the principle sometimes called, “The Causal Closure of the Physical.”
*** The only mental events that might not be physical events, if this argument is sound, are those that are causally impotent (i.e. that do not cause physical events).

This is a version of the argument that Kim gives on pages 110-114. Note that the “physical events” in question could be specific brain events (like C-fiber stimulation) or they could be abstract states that are physically realized, like whatever physical event functions in the “pain role” in an organism (which might be different in different organisms, or maybe even at different moments in the same organism). So the conclusion of this argument is compatible with both mind-brain identity theory and with functionalism.

For your paper, you have two options:

Version A: Argue that one of the premises (either (1) or (2)) is false.
Version B: Argue that the argument is sound.

NOTE: in what follows, I will sometimes say that an argument is “strong” or “weak” or that a premise is “strong” or “weak”. Here is what I mean by those words:

- To say that a premise is strong means that it is likely to be true.
- To say that a premise is weak means that it is likely to be false.
- To say that an argument is strong means that the argument is probably sound.
- To say that an argument is weak is to say that the argument is probably not sound.

The FIRST step in writing your paper is to decide which version of the paper you are going to write. You should decide based on what you think is true, not based on which paper you think will be easiest to complete.

The SECOND step in writing your paper is to read over the instructions for the version of the paper you have chosen (see below).
The THIRD step in writing your paper is to think carefully about the arguments you will make, and write a simple outline for your paper. For the “thinking” part, you are encouraged to talk to at least one other person in the class about your arguments (or to me at office hours).

The FOURTH step in writing your paper is to write it, hopefully in time for the rough draft deadline on March 12th at 11:59pm, so that you can get the my feedback.

The FIFTH step in writing your paper is to have at least one person in the class (preferably more) read over it and give you feedback. Then you revise the paper taking that feedback into account.

NOTE: As you can probably tell from the instructions, this paper will be SHORT, perhaps no more than 2-3 pages. There is no required length for the paper, but if you write a GOOD paper, with strong arguments, the shorter the better. You will not lose points for the paper being too short, so long as it makes good, clear arguments.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR VERSION A OF THE PAPER (arguing that the CE argument is unsound)

Your paper will have seven sections. These sections must be clearly distinguished. If you like, you may number the sections to make this clear. Here are the seven sections you should have:

1. State what you are going to argue for (that the Causal Exclusion Argument is unsound and therefore that it does not establish its conclusion). This should take no more than one sentence. There should be no introduction other than that one sentence.

2. In your own words summarize the causal exclusion argument. In this section of the paper you should explain what each of the premises mean. Use language that is as clear and ordinary as possible such that one of your friends who has maybe only taken one philosophy class could read your explanation and understand the premises of the argument. This should take no more than two paragraphs.

3. Say which premise of the argument is the weakest (that is, the most likely to be false). This should take no more than one sentence.

4. Give what you think is the strongest argument against the premise you chose in 3. In other words, give an argument that the premise is false. The argument should be expressed in your own words. You may formalize it if you wish (to “formalize” an argument means to write it in a list format with numbered premises). The idea is that you are trying to show that the Causal Exclusion Argument is unsound by showing that one if its premises is false. This section should be no more than two paragraphs.

5. Give what you think is the best argument that someone who disagrees with you could give in response to what you said in 4. This is called “raising an objection”. In philosophy
papers it is always very important to consider how someone who disagrees with you might respond (how they might “object”) to your argument. This should be no more than two paragraphs.

6. Respond to the objection you raised in 5. In other words, give an argument against the objection, explaining why you think the objection does not ultimately succeed in supporting the premise. This should take no more than one paragraph.

7. Conclude your paper by summarizing your argument and conclusion very briefly. You should do this in one short paragraph.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR VERSIONS B OF THE PAPER (arguing that the CE argument is sound)
Your paper will have seven sections. These parts must be clearly distinguished. If you like, you may number the sections to make this clear. Here are the seven sections you should have:

1. State what you are going to argue for (that the Causal Exclusion Argument is sound and therefore that it establishes its conclusion). This should take no more than one sentence. There should be no introduction other than that one sentence.

2. In your own words summarize the causal exclusion argument. In this section of the paper you should explain what each of the premises mean and what the conclusion means. Use language that is as clear and ordinary as possible such that one of your friends who has maybe only taken one philosophy class could read your explanation and understand the premises of the argument. This should take no more than two paragraphs.

3. Say which premise of the argument is the weakest (that is, the most likely to be false). This should take no more than one sentence.

4. Give what you think is the strongest argument for the premise you chose in 3. In other words, give an argument that the premise is true. The argument should be expressed in your own words. You may formalize it if you wish (to “formalize” an argument means to write it in a list format with numbered premises). The idea is that you are trying to strengthen the Causal Exclusion Argument at its weakest point. This section should be no more than two paragraphs.

5. Give what you think is the best objection to the argument you made in 4. This is called “raising an objection” to the argument. In philosophy papers it is always very important to consider how someone who disagrees with you might respond (how they might “object”) to your argument. This should be no more than two paragraphs.

6. Respond to the objection you raised in 5. In other words, give an argument against the objection, explaining why you think the objection does not ultimately succeed in showing the premise to be false. This should take no more than one paragraph.
7. Conclude your paper by summarizing your argument and conclusion very briefly. You should do this in one short paragraph.

IMPORTANT THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT WRITING THE PAPER:

• Introduction and Conclusion
These are the easiest parts of your paper. The introduction is one sentence (section 1). Your conclusion can also be one sentence, but if it is not, it should be a very short paragraph.

• The writing style for philosophy papers
Feel free to use “I” and write more or less the way that you speak. Generally, the writing style of philosophy papers is pretty informal.

Make sure that what you say is as clear as possible. Try giving your paper to someone who is not in the class and see if they can follow your reasoning. If they can, that is a good sign that your paper is clear.

Also, asways say things as simply as possible. If you have beautiful, intelligent sounding writing, you will not impress me. But you might annoy me if you take 50 words to say something that could have been said in one sentence.

• Defining terms
If you use a word whose meaning might be unclear take a moment to say what you mean by that word. This is very important in any philosophy paper. It helps to make your arguments clearer and sharper.

• Argue for what you believe
In the papers you write for this class you should argue for what you really believe. Don’t just defend the argument that you think is easiest to write a paper about, but the one you think is true.

• Raising Objections
When you need to raise and answer an objection to your thesis, it is tempting to pick an objection that is weak and easy to answer and to steer clear of objections that will be more dificult for you to answer. Don’t fall prey to this temptation! A paper that raises a strong objection and struggles to answer it is ALWAYS a better paper than one that raises an weak objection and answers it well. Part of doing philosophy is being honest about the arguments against you, and that means confronting the toughest objections.
• No need to consult outside sources
  For this paper you should not need to use any sources other than the texts we have read and our class notes/discussions. However, you may use outside sources if you wish, so long as you cite them clearly. The format of the citation does not matter, so long as it is clear.

• Collaboration
  I encourage you to discuss your arguments with others. You may even have others read your paper and give you suggestions. Whenever I write a philosophical paper, I always have two or three (or four or five) people look at what I’ve written before it is finished, to help me make it better.

  Of course, the final product must be your own. If someone gives you a suggestion or an idea that didn’t come from you but that you want to use in your paper, you must indicate this in a footnote. For example: “Thanks to Suzie Smith for suggesting this line of argument,” or “This idea came from discussions with Bill Murphy and Maria Gonzalez.”

  Philosophy is better when it is done in community. So as long as you say where you got your ideas, it is okay to get ideas from other people. However, those ideas must be expressed in your own words. You may not use any text from anyone else’s paper (or from any other source, without quoting and citing it). You must write your entire paper yourself.

• Rough Draft
  If you choose to turn in a rough draft, I will give you comments that will help you with revising it into a final draft. The better your rough draft is, the more helpful my comments will be. I can guarantee that if you turn in a rough draft and revise your paper based on my comments, the final product will be better than if you merely turn the paper in for the first time at the final due date.

• Turning in the final draft
  For the final draft, I will be grading your papers blindly. That means, I don’t want to see your name until I’ve finished grading it. This helps me to avoid unconsciously grading in a biased way. So please do the following before emailing the final version of your paper to me:

  - Make sure your name is NOT in the filename.
  - Inside the document, put your name on the last page, which should be otherwise blank.
  - Your name should be NOWHERE else in the document (not at the beginning, nor in a header/footer).
  - Please turn in the paper in WORD FORMAT ONLY. If I have to convert it to Word myself, it will be hard not to see your name, so please convert it to .docx format before you send it to me.

I may deduct points from your grade if you do not follow these instructions.
GRADING RUBRIC

This is to give you an idea of what I’m looking for with the paper and how I will grade it. Here I will describe what an ’A’ paper, a ’B’ paper, and a ’C’ paper would look like. Other grades (like A- or C+) would fall in between these descriptions.

AN ’A’ PAPER
- will be free of any major grammar and spelling errors.
- will follow the instructions and have seven sections that are clearly discernible.
- will have a clear writing style that is easy to follow.
- will stay on topic.
- will summarize the argument clearly and well in section 2.
- will give a clear, concise and strong arguments in section 4-6.
- will raise strong objections, not weak ones that are easy to answer.
- will show independent thinking that goes beyond merely what was said in class.

A ’B’ PAPER
- will be free of any major grammar and spelling errors.
- will follow the instructions and have seven sections that are clearly discernible.
- will have a writing style that may be difficult in places but still can be followed.
- may go off topic occasionally, but mainly sticks to the argument and the paper format.
- will summarize the argument clearly and well in section 2.
- will give, for the most part, clear, concise and strong arguments in sections 4-6.
- will make an effort to raise strong objections, not weak ones that are easy to answer.

A ’C’ PAPER
- will be mostly free of any major grammar and spelling errors.
- will follow the instructions and have six sections that are clearly discernible.
- may have some difficulties with the writing style that make it hard to follow the paper.
- may go off topic occasionally, but mainly sticks to the argument and the paper format.
- will summarize the argument correctly, but maybe not so clearly.
- will give some arguments that are clear in sections 4-6, but also some that are unclear or not relevant to the topic.

Of course, sometimes there is a paper that does extremely poorly in one area but extremely well in another. In those cases, I will put the greatest weight on the arguments/objection in sections 4-6 and somewhat lesser weight on other factors.

It is possible to get a ’D’ or an ’F’ on your paper as well, if it fails to reach the standards for a ’C’.

As always, I am available to help you in thinking through the material for your papers. Just come to my office hours or email me to make an appointment.