

Phil 149

Philosophy of Psychology

Winter 2013, Mon. Wed., 5:00pm-6:20 pm

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1. Course Description

Experimental psychologists (in contrast to therapists) view themselves as scientists in the business of explaining how humans (and some other species) perform mental activities such as perceiving, imagining, remembering, evaluating, planning, deciding, etc. A major objective of scientists is to explain the phenomena in their domain. What sort of explanations do psychologists develop? Are their explanations similar to or different than those found in the natural sciences? How do psychological explanations relate to those of other disciplines, especially those disciplines included in cognitive science? The course will focus on major research traditions in psychology, with a special focus on contemporary cognitive psychology, and examine what each sought or seeks to explain and how it is going or went about offering explanations. Research on memory will provide a focus for the latter portion of the course where the goal is to understand how memory is investigated and how results of memory studies affect our society..

Given the nature of the class, substantial material will be presented in lectures that goes beyond what is included in the readings. Also, philosophy is an activity, and learning activities requires active engagement. Accordingly, class attendance and participation in discussion is critical. Although we will have discussions on other occasions as well, several classes are designated as discussion classes.

2. Course Requirements

Class attendance is mandatory. Missing classes more than very occasionally will result in a significant reduction in your grade. To get the most out of the class, it is absolutely essential that every one comes to class prepared to discuss the readings. Questions will be posed in each class to be answered using Clickers. Some clicker questions will test basic ideas from the assigned reading. On these questions, one point will be awarded for answering the question and a second point for answering correctly. Other questions will not have a specific answer designated and will serve to foster discussion. Two points will be awarded for answering each such question. A commulative score based on clicker responses will count for 10% of your final grade.

To promote engagement with the reading and to foster subsequent discussions in class, you will be required to email comments or questions on the reading assigned for those classes marked with an asterisk on the Schedule of Class Meetings and Readings below. These emails should be one paragraph in length. You can write about anything in the readings you find interesting, puzzling, strange, clearly wrong, obviously right, etc. These will be graded as acceptable or unacceptable. To ensure that your submission is acceptable, your comment or question must demonstrate that you have read and thought about the assigned material. (Your paragraph may focus on one specific part of the reading--do not try to discuss everything.) For classes without reading assignments (designated Discussion), your email should pose a question you would like to

see discussed. Try to frame some of your questions as multiple choice so that they can be the basis for Clicker Questions during the discussion. Both types of email must be submitted (as plain text, *not as attachments*) to phil149@mechanism.ucsd.edu by 7 AM on the classes preceded by an asterisk in the schedule below. 10% of your final grade will be based on these email comments.

There will be two exams, a mid-term and a final. The mid-term will count for 25% of your final grade; the final will count for 30%. Exams will include both short answer and essay questions and the set of questions will be distributed approximately one week before the exams. You will also need to write one 3-5 page paper that will count for 25% of your grade. The paper, due by Noon on March 1, must be on one of the topics that will be assigned in class. If possible, the paper should be submitted in Word by email attachment sent to papers@mechanism.ucsd.edu (please be sure to check for viruses before submitting your file!).

Above average participation in class discussions can result in a raising of your final grade from what is determined by the above percentages on these other assignments.

3. Texts

All assigned readings for the course are available on the internet through links from this syllabus. Those items that are on license to UCSD may only be available if you are on campus or set up a virtual private network (directions on doing so are available through [Academic Computing Services](#)).

If you do not already own one, you will also need to purchase an i>clicker student response transmitter. These transmitters, informally called “clickers,” are available at the UCSD bookstore. Make sure to get an i>clicker and not a different system (e.g., H-ITT or PRS). For more information, visit <http://acms.ucsd.edu/services/classroom-support/clickers.html>.

4. Email List

There is an email distribution lists for this course. It is required that you subscribe to this list. Do it IMMEDIATELY. You can always unsubscribe later if you drop the course. The purpose of the list is to allow me to distribute information regarding due dates for assignments, changes of schedule, etc. Some of this information is crucial, and some of it may be distributed early on. To subscribe, you simply need to send an email message to the following address: philpsych-subscribe@mechanism.ucsd.edu. After you send the subscribe request, you will receive a reply from philpsych-subscribe@mechanism.ucsd.edu that will ask you to confirm your request. Follow the directions in this message to confirm you subscription. If you later want to remove yourself from this list, send email to philpsych-unsubscribe@mechanism.ucsd.edu.

Only I have authorization to send mail to this list. There should be no spam. If you receive mail from this list that is not from me, be assured that I will as well and will take measures to block further abuse. (The welcome message you receive suggests that you can send email to the list. Sorry, but you cannot. If there is interest in setting up a voluntary discussion list for the class to which anyone can submit, I am happy to do so, but participation will not make it required.)

5. Schedule of Classes and Readings

Note: This schedule of reading assignments is tentative and subject to revision. Dates with asterisks are dates on which comments/question paragraphs are due. These comments/questions must be sent to phil149@mechanism.ucsd.edu by 7 AM on the dates indicated.

January 7: [Psychology as a Science](#)

January 9: Roots: Aristotle and Descartes

Shields, Christopher (2010). [Aristotle's psychology](#). *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

Skirry, Justin (2006). [René Descartes: The Mind-Body Distinction](#). *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (especially sections 1 to 3)

*January 14: Roots of Experimental Psychology: Psychophysics and Memory

Ebbinghaus, Hermann. (1913). [Memory: A contribution to experimental psychology](#) (Henry A. Ruger & Clara E. Bussenius, Trans.). Originally published in New York by Teachers College, Columbia University. (Original German work *Über das Gedächtnis* published 1885). Chapters 3 and 8.

Fechner, Gustav Theodor (1860). [Elements of psychophysics, Sections VII \("Measurement of sensation"\) and XVI \("The fundamental formula and the measurement formula"\)](#) (Trans. by Herbert S. Langfeld, first appearing in B. Rand (Ed.) (1912), *The classical psychologists*).

January 16: Characterizing the Conscious Mind: Brentano and James

Huemer, Wolfgang (2010). [Brentano](#). *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Parts 1-5.

James, William (1879). [Are we automata?](#) *Mind*, 4, 1-22.

January 21: University Holiday--No Class

January 23: The Behaviorist Revolution

Pavlov, Ivan P. (1927). [Conditioned reflexes: An investigation of the physiological activity of the cerebral cortex](#) (G. V. Anrep, Trans.). **Required:** Lecture I.

Watson, John B. (1913). [Psychology as the behaviorist views it](#). *Psychological Review*, 20, 158-177.

*January 28: Discussion

January 30: Mature Behaviorism

Tolman, Edward, C. (1948). [Cognitive maps in rats and men](#). *Psychological Review*, 55(4), 189-208.

Skinner, Burrhus Frederic 1977. [Why I am not a cognitive psychologist](#). *Behaviorism* 5 (2):1-10.

February 4: The Cognitive Revolution in Psychology

Bruner, Jerome S. & Goodman, Cecile C. (1947). [Value and need as organizing factors in perception](#). *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 42, 33-44.

Miller, George A. (1956). [The magical number seven, plus or minus two: Some limits on our capacity for processing information](#). *Psychological Review*, 63, 81-97 (especially the section entitled "The span of immediate memory")

*February 6: Discussion

February 11: FIRST EXAM

February 13: From the Cognitive Revolution to Cognitive Science

Thagard, Paul (2010). [Cognitive science](#). Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.
Bechtel, W., Abrahamsen, A., and Graham, G. (2001). [Cognitive science: History](#).
International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences. New York: Elsevier, pp.
2154-2158.

February 18: University Holiday--no class

***February 20: Stances on the Relation of Psychology to the Brain**

Schneider, Steven (2009). [Identity Theory](#). Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy.
Polger, Thomas (2008). [Functionalism](#). Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy
Ramsey, William (2007). [Eliminative materialism](#). Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.

February 25: Multiple Realizability and Reduction

Fodor, Jerry (1974). [Special sciences, or the disunity of science as a working hypothesis](#).
Synthese, 28, 97-115.
Bickle, John (2006). [Multiple realizability](#). Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.

***February 27: Discussion**

March 1: Short paper due!

March 4: Psychology and Brain Mechanisms of Memory

Sutton, J. (2010). [Memory](#). Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.
Squire, L.(2004). [Memory systems of the brain: A brief history and current perspective](#).
Neurobiology of Learning and Memory 82, 171–177

***March 6: Memory and Personal Identity**

Corkin, S. (2002). [What's new with the amnesic patient H.M.?](#) *Nature Reviews Neuroscience*,
3 (2), 153-160.
Wilson, A., & Ross, M. (2003). [The identity function of autobiographical memory: Time is on
our side](#). *Memory*, 11 (2), 137 - 149.
Aoki, C. R. A. (2008). [Rewriting My Autobiography](#). *Bulletin of Science, Technology &
Society*, 28 (4), 349-359.

March 11: The Fragility of Memory

Loftus, Elizabeth F. (1997). [Creating false memories](#). *Scientific American*, 277, number 3, 70-
75.
Roediger, Henry L. & McDermott, Kathleen B. (2000). [Tricks of memory](#). *Current
Directions in Psychological Science*, 9, 123-127.

***March 13: Discussion**

March 18, 7:00-9:59: Final Exam