



# PHIL2062

## Philosophy of Psychology

Session 2, Fully online/virtual 2020

*Department of Philosophy*

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#### **Disclaimer**

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#### **Notice**

As part of [Phase 3 of our return to campus plan](#), most units will now run tutorials, seminars and other small group learning activities on campus for the second half-year, while keeping an online version available for those students unable to return or those who choose to continue their studies online.

To check the availability of face-to-face and online activities for your unit, please go to [timetable viewer](#). To check detailed information on unit assessments visit your unit's iLearn space or consult your unit convenor.

## General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff

Alexander Gillett

[alexander.gillett@mq.edu.au](mailto:alexander.gillett@mq.edu.au)

Credit points

10

Prerequisites

40cp at 1000 level or above

Corequisites

Co-badged status

Unit description

Psychologists study the mind, but what exactly is a mind? What is the relationship between the mind and the body? What is consciousness? Do we know our own minds, or are we driven by unconscious motivations? In this unit we will examine these big philosophical questions about the mind, and we will also explore the philosophical foundations of different forms of psychotherapy. Cognitive behavioural therapy is advertised as "evidence based". What does the evidence show about its effectiveness? What is the scientific status of psychoanalysis--is it a pseudoscience, as its critics maintain? We will also explore topical issues in the philosophy of psychology, such as the following. To what extent, if any, can differences between the sexes be explained by brain differences? Did humans evolve to be racist? Do non-human animals have minds? What makes us choose our romantic partners, and where do we fall when we fall in love? No background in psychology is necessary for this unit.

## Important Academic Dates

Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are available at <https://www.mq.edu.au/study/calendar-of-dates>

## Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

**ULO1:** Understand the major issues connecting psychology and philosophy

**ULO2:** Critically evaluate various positions in philosophy of psychology

**ULO3:** Clearly and accurately communicate issues and arguments in the philosophy of psychology in both spoken and written form

**ULO4:** Develop your own philosophically informed views on the major issues in

philosophy of science

**ULO5:** Offer constructive and courteous feedback to your peers

## General Assessment Information

Unless a Disruption to Studies request has been submitted and approved, (a) a penalty for lateness will apply – two (2) marks out of 100 will be deducted per day for assignments submitted after the due date – and (b) no assignment will be accepted seven (7) days (incl. weekends) after the original submission deadline. No late submissions will be accepted for timed assessments – e.g. quizzes, online tests.

## Assessment Tasks

| Name                                     | Weighting | Hurdle | Due                        |
|--|-----------|--------|----------------------------|
| <a href="#">Forum participation</a>      | 10%       | No     | Weekly                     |
| <a href="#">Weekly Discussion Guides</a> | 30%       | No     | Weekly                     |
| <a href="#">Final essay</a>              | 35%       | No     | 8/11/2020 (end of week 13) |
| <a href="#">First essay</a>              | 25%       | No     | 13/9/2020 (End of Week 7)  |

### Forum participation

Assessment Type <sup>1</sup>: Participatory task

Indicative Time on Task <sup>2</sup>: 20 hours

Due: **Weekly**

Weighting: **10%**

Students are required to contribute to the forum on the iLearn site, where discussion questions will be posted

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- Offer constructive and courteous feedback to your peers

## Weekly Discussion Guides

Assessment Type <sup>1</sup>: Summary

Indicative Time on Task <sup>2</sup>: 10 hours

Due: **Weekly**

Weighting: **30%**

A short written piece of writing based on the reading from that week

On successful completion you will be able to:

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- Develop your own philosophically informed views on the major issues in philosophy of science

## Final essay

Assessment Type <sup>1</sup>: Essay

Indicative Time on Task <sup>2</sup>: 25 hours

Due: **8/11/2020 (end of week 13)**

Weighting: **35%**

Students will write an essay that provides a careful critical examination, based on reasons, argumentation and evidence, of a set topic

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Understand the major issues connecting psychology and philosophy
- Critically evaluate various positions in philosophy of psychology
- Clearly and accurately communicate issues and arguments in the philosophy of psychology in both spoken and written form
- Develop your own philosophically informed views on the major issues in philosophy of science

## First essay

Assessment Type <sup>1</sup>: Essay

Indicative Time on Task <sup>2</sup>: 20 hours

Due: **13/9/2020 (End of Week 7)**

Weighting: **25%**

Students will write an essay that provides a careful critical examination, based on reasons, argumentation and evidence, of a set topic

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Understand the major issues connecting psychology and philosophy
- Critically evaluate various positions in philosophy of psychology
- Clearly and accurately communicate issues and arguments in the philosophy of psychology in both spoken and written form
- Develop your own philosophically informed views on the major issues in philosophy of science

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<sup>1</sup> If you need help with your assignment, please contact:

- the academic teaching staff in your unit for guidance in understanding or completing this type of assessment
- the [Writing Centre](#) for academic skills support.

<sup>2</sup> Indicative time-on-task is an estimate of the time required for completion of the assessment task and is subject to individual variation

## Delivery and Resources

**Required Reading** There will be a core texts to read for each week of the course. It is mandatory that these be read as tutorial discussions and lectures are based on these. You will also be required to submit weekly discussion guides relating to these readings. The weekly readings will be available via the Leganto service, which is accessible through the ilearn. Additional optional and further readings will be made available electronically on the ilearn in each week. These will be useful for the research essays.

**Technology Used and Required** We use an iLearn website, and the Echo360 lecture recordings. Any other material you need will be available through the iLearn website. We recommend you have access to a reliable internet connection throughout the semester.

**Assignment Submission** Essay assignments in this course will be submitted electronically, as

word documents. There is no need for a coversheet - the iLearn assignment submission (Turnitin) involves declaring your details and honesty in submitting your work. Please note, we do not accept submission by email attachment.

## Unit Schedule

### 1. Introduction

A general introduction to the course structure and assessments. An overview of the following weeks material and how it is arranged into two major themes. Outlining general questions of: what is philosophy? What is psychology? What is the philosophy of psychology? And what is the history of the relationship between philosophy and psychology (and in particular how this relates to the problems of dualism). **No tutorial this week.**

#### *Part One: The Structure of the Mind*

### 2. Behaviourism

This week we discuss how psychology began to emerge from Western philosophy at the turn of the 20th C as a distinct branch of the sciences of the mind. In particular, we will focus on behaviourism as a response to the problems in other approaches (such as introspectionism and psychoanalysis). We will cover both philosophical and scientific variants of this position.

### 3. Mind-Brain Identity theory

Continuing with a historical approach we turn to Mind-Brain theory as a philosophically motivated position that moved on from the limitations inherent in behaviorism. Mind-brain theory is the claim that brain states are identical to mental states. Examining this position is important for considering the dominant philosophical response to this claim (functionalism – which we turn to next week) and also the rise of modern neuroscience (which we return to later in the course).

### 4. Functionalism

Functionalism is the dominant philosophical position in the philosophy of mind and the default view of many psychologists. Functionalism is the claim that it is not what mental states are composed of which is important. What is important, and what determines what a mental state *is*, is the fact that it plays a function in a mental system. A key concept for this week is multiple realizability. The following two weeks build on this philosophical framework.

### 5. The Mind as an Evolved Computer

The central metaphor of the modern cognitive sciences is the idea that the 'mind is (like) a computer'. There is also a major research program – evolutionary psychology – which claims that the mind is an evolved computer composed of domain-specific modules which have evolved in response to challenges in our species' Pleistocene past. This week we present the details of

the computational approach: representationalism and modules. And we consider some of the arguments for and against this position.

## 6. The Extended Mind

What is the appropriate unit of analysis for studying the mind? Can we solely focus on individuals divorced from their environment? Or are bodies and environments crucial explanatory factors for properly understanding the mind? Even further, is it possible that our minds are *partially constituted* by our bodies and other parts of the world?

## 7. Essay writing and research workshop

Having concluded the first part of the course on the structure of the mind; this week we discuss reading, research, and writing strategies for philosophy essays. **No tutorial this week.**

## *PART TWO: Methodological Concerns*

## 8. The WEIRD problem and the Enculturated Mind

Recent research has indicated that a majority of psychological research is carried out on WEIRD participants (Western, Educated, Industrialised, Rich, and Democratic). Furthermore, cross-cultural and anthropology research indicates that these individuals are outliers and are not a representative sample of the human population. This week we discuss the methodological and philosophical implications of this state of affairs. In particular, we raise the question of the importance of culture for understanding the mind.

## 9. The Nature of Belief and Misinformation

Humans are social animals and this influences the way in which we form beliefs (e.g. what is the weather outside? What should I eat? Who should I vote for? Should I vaccinate my children?). But the way in which humans form beliefs about the world are becoming increasingly influenced by our increased mediated forms of connectivity - particularly online in social media platforms and other internet resources. This week we will examine crucial concepts such as echo chamber effects and the nature of belief and misinformation; and how these pertain to a range of current topics and conspiracy theories.

## 10. Consciousness: neuroscience and non-western philosophy

This week we have a guest lecture by Philip Martin - a specialist on non-Western philosophy. Questions of consciousness are a core concern in philosophy and psychology. Recent advancements in neuroscience have enabled an exploration of the neural correlates of consciousness. But *hard* questions still remain about why certain brain states give rise to consciousness at all. We will discuss non-Western philosophical contributions to this debate.

### 11. The Interface Problem

What is a psychological explanation? How should we understand the nature of psychological explanations in relation to the other sciences of the mind? There are numerous branches of the sciences of the mind, which also intersect with philosophy and other related fields like anthropology. How should we understand the interdisciplinary relationship between these fields? Are they in a hierarchy? Are they not related but fragmented? Are they reducible to one another somehow? This week we will examine core philosophical concepts of: explanation; reductionism; explanatory pluralism; mechanism; and emergence.

### 12. The Replication Crisis

In our final week we turn to a recent set of controversies in psychology around the failure to replicate long established and new findings. We also discuss a range of other related concerns including, but not limited to, how psychological research is used, and how we can make inferences from experiments. This topic will also show how the issues in modern psychology draw us back to the philosophical foundations of the field that we began the course with.

### 13. Final Essay Due

**No readings, no tutorial, and no lecture.** This week is writing and research time for the second essay

## Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from [Policy Central \(https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policy-central\)](https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policy-central). Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:

- [Academic Appeals Policy](#)
- [Academic Integrity Policy](#)
- [Academic Progression Policy](#)
- [Assessment Policy](#)
- [Fitness to Practice Procedure](#)
- [Grade Appeal Policy](#)
- [Complaint Management Procedure for Students and Members of the Public](#)
- [Special Consideration Policy](#) (**Note:** *The Special Consideration Policy is effective from 4 December 2017 and replaces the Disruption to Studies Policy.*)

Students seeking more policy resources can visit the [Student Policy Gateway \(https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/student-policy-gateway\)](https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/student-policy-gateway). It is your one-stop-shop for the key policies you



need to know about throughout your undergraduate student journey.

If you would like to see all the policies relevant to Learning and Teaching visit [Policy Central \(http://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policy-central\)](http://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policy-central).

## Student Code of Conduct

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct: <https://students.mq.edu.au/study/getting-started/student-conduct>

## Results

Results published on platform other than [eStudent](#), (eg. iLearn, Coursera etc.) or released directly by your Unit Convenor, are not confirmed as they are subject to final approval by the University. Once approved, final results will be sent to your student email address and will be made available in [eStudent](#). For more information visit [ask.mq.edu.au](http://ask.mq.edu.au) or if you are a Global MBA student contact [globalmba.support@mq.edu.au](mailto:globalmba.support@mq.edu.au)

## Student Support

Macquarie University provides a range of support services for students. For details, visit <http://students.mq.edu.au/support/>

## Learning Skills

Learning Skills ([mq.edu.au/learningskills](http://mq.edu.au/learningskills)) provides academic writing resources and study strategies to help you improve your marks and take control of your study.

- [Getting help with your assignment](#)
- [Workshops](#)
- [StudyWise](#)
- [Academic Integrity Module](#)

The Library provides online and face to face support to help you find and use relevant information resources.

- [Subject and Research Guides](#)
- [Ask a Librarian](#)

## Student Services and Support

Students with a disability are encouraged to contact the [Disability Service](#) who can provide appropriate help with any issues that arise during their studies.

## Student Enquiries

For all student enquiries, visit Student Connect at [ask.mq.edu.au](http://ask.mq.edu.au)

If you are a Global MBA student contact [globalmba.support@mq.edu.au](mailto:globalmba.support@mq.edu.au)

## IT Help

For help with University computer systems and technology, visit [http://www.mq.edu.au/about\\_us/offices\\_and\\_units/information\\_technology/help/](http://www.mq.edu.au/about_us/offices_and_units/information_technology/help/).

When using the University's IT, you must adhere to the [Acceptable Use of IT Resources Policy](#). The policy applies to all who connect to the MQ network including students.