



PHIL2062

Philosophy of Psychology

Session 1, Weekday attendance, North Ryde 2021

Department of Philosophy

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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 activities on campus, and most will keep an online version available to those students unable to return or those who choose to continue their studies online.

To check the availability of face-to-face 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

Convenor

Alexander Gillett

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Lecturer

Caitrin Donovan

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
Online quizzes	25%	No	Fortnightly
Short media presentations	20%	No	1/4/2021
Tutorial participation	20%	No	Weekly
Essay	35%	No	4/6/2021

Online quizzes

Assessment Type ¹: Quiz/Test

Indicative Time on Task ²: 15 hours

Due: **Fortnightly**

Weighting: **25%**

Online quizzes

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Understand the major issues connecting psychology and philosophy
- Critically evaluate various positions in philosophy of psychology

Short media presentations

Assessment Type ¹: Media presentation

Indicative Time on Task ²: 15 hours

Due: **1/4/2021**

Weighting: **20%**

Short format recorded presentations involving audio and/or visual material reflecting on questions posed by the weekly content

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

Tutorial participation

Assessment Type ¹: Participatory task

Indicative Time on Task ²: 15 hours

Due: **Weekly**

Weighting: **20%**

Contribution to the discussion of weekly readings during on-campus or online tutorial activities. Students are expected to be well prepared and make a constructive contribution.

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
- Offer constructive and courteous feedback to your peers

Essay

Assessment Type ¹: Essay

Indicative Time on Task ²: 30 hours

Due: **4/6/2021**

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

¹ 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.

² 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 or PDFs. 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. Functionalism

Is the mind simply the brain? Many psychologists and philosophers think it is more complex than this. 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.

4. The Computational Mind

A central idea or metaphor within cognitive psychology is the idea that the mind is or is like a computer. This week we examine the history of this idea and how ideas in philosophy and computer science have influenced scientific research of the human mind. We examine both the main ideas for and against this position including some far-reaching thought experiments: The Turing Test and the Chinese Room Argument.

5. The Modular Mind

Building on the idea that the mind is a computer, this week we examine the claim that structure of the mind is composed of a series of modules with certain specific features. We shall also discuss the relationship of this idea to questions about the mind evolved. 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.

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?

PART TWO: Methodological Concerns

7. Philosophy of Psychiatry

What do we mean when we say that a mind is disordered or dysfunctional? Are psychiatric conditions just brain disorders? On what grounds does one distinguish “normal” from “pathological” minds? This week we turn to the philosophy of psychiatry, where the question of what minds are and how we should study them plays a critical role

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. Beyond Evolutionary Psychology

Building on our discussions in the previous weeks (5-8), we discuss the evolution of the human mind. What is the structure of the human mind? How have evolutionary forces structured our minds? What is the importance of phenotypic plasticity and cultural niches?

10. 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.

11. 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.

12. Comparative Cognition

Having spent much of the course examining the philosophical questions about psychology only in regards to humans; in this final section of the course we branch out to consider the minds of other animals. Do other animals have sophisticated minds, with abilities in causal reasoning, emotional intelligence, and social cognition? How can we go about exploring these questions in a methodologically rigorous way? This approach is necessary to attempt to overcome and begin to articulate a non-anthropocentric approach – not only for properly understanding the minds of other animals, but also in understanding ourselves.

13. Final Essay Due

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

Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from [Policy Central \(https://policies.mq.edu.au\)](https://policies.mq.edu.au). 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](#)

Students seeking more policy resources can visit [Student Policies \(https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/policies\)](https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/policies). It is your one-stop-shop for the key policies you need to know about throughout your undergraduate student journey.

To find other policies relating to Teaching and Learning, visit [Policy Central \(https://policies.mq.edu.au\)](https://policies.mq.edu.au) and use the [search tool](#).

Student Code of Conduct

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of

Conduct: <https://students.mq.edu.au/admin/other-resources/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 or if you are a Global MBA student contact 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) 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

If you are a Global MBA student contact 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/.

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.