

# **Philosophy of Psychology**

## Spring 2012

**Course Instructor:** Jennifer Nado  
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**Office Hours:** W 13:30-15:30/F 12:30-14:30  
**Course Number:** PHI399J  
**Time:** M 14:00-15:29/W 15:30-16:59  
**Location:** M SO108/W ARG01

### **Course Description:**

This course is an introduction to philosophical issues arising from the fields of psychology and cognitive science. We will begin with an overview of some major phases in the development of psychology, with a focus on parallels in philosophy of mind. We will then examine the relationship between psychology and commonsense views of the mind. From there, we will examine more specialized topics within the philosophy of psychology, including computational and connectionist theories of cognition, the ‘modularity’ of mind, theories of concepts, theories of our understanding of other minds, and views on human rationality.

### **Required Readings:**

Required readings are listed on the schedule below. All required readings will be posted in electronic format on the course’s Moodle website. Please note that I will generally not require you to read the entire paper – instead, I will post the assigned page numbers under the reading links on Moodle. Everything else should be treated as optional supplementary reading.

### **Learning Outcomes:**

Students will learn to:

- 1) Identify and understand major stages in the history of psychology
- 2) Understand the issues surrounding the relationships between ‘folk’ psychology, scientific psychology, and the other sciences.
- 3) Be able to characterize computational and connectionist approaches to the mind.
- 4) Understand the ‘modularity of mind’ hypothesis.
- 5) Be able to characterize major theories of concepts.
- 6) Distinguish theory-theory and simulation approaches to our understanding of other minds.
- 7) Recognize some major challenges to the assumption that humans are inherently rational

### **Measurement of Learning Outcomes:**

Students will be assessed on the basis of a mid-term and a final paper, as well as on course attendance and participation, which may include contribution to online discussions outside of class.

**Assessment:**

Mid-term paper: 30%

Final paper: 50%

Participation and attendance: 20%

**Papers:**

You will write two papers during the semester – one midterm paper, and one final paper. The midterm paper will be 2-4 pages, and will focus on summarizing the ideas of one of the authors we read in class. It will be due on Monday, March 19.

The final paper will be 5-7 pages, and will focus on one of the broad topics we cover during class. In the final paper, you will be expected to present more than one viewpoint on your chosen topic, and to present your own view as to which view is correct. The final paper will be due one week after the end of class – Wednesday, May 16.

I will provide suggested paper topics several weeks before the papers are due, but you may also choose your own topic – provided you email me for approval first.

For both papers, you may turn in a rough draft 7 days or more before the final due date. You will receive corrections/suggestions within about 3 days.

**Plagiarism:**

Citing the materials you've used in your papers is extremely important. If you're quoting from *anywhere*, make sure you've listed the source (author, text, *and* page number) in a bibliography at the end, and make sure you've put the quoted material in quotation marks followed by the author's last name and the page number in parentheses (e.g., (Nado 106)). If I discover that you have plagiarized any portion of a paper, you will automatically receive a failing grade.

**Attendance/Participation:**

Philosophy is best learned through discussion and active engagement in a classroom setting. For this reason, a substantial portion of your grade will come from attendance and participation.

I expect you to miss no more than 2-3 classes during the semester, unless there is an emergency or other reasonable excuse for extra absences. Though I may not take daily attendance, it's easy to remember who generally comes to class and who frequently misses. Poor attendance WILL affect your grade.

Though I understand that many people are too shy to speak in class, in order to get a high score in the attendance/participation category you **MUST** actively participate in the course in some way or another. Speaking in class is the easiest way to get full participation points, but I also look at other forms of participation such as asking questions/discussing course material with me after class, during office hours, or through email.

There will also be a course message board on Moodle – here you can post questions or thoughts to share with your other classmates. Participation on the message board will increase your participation grade.

**Schedule:**

1. Monday, 30 January – Course introduction	No Readings
2. Wednesday, 1 February – Behaviorism I	Watson, “Psychology as the Behaviorist Views it”
3. Monday, 6 February – Behaviorism II	Chomsky, “A Review of B.F. Skinner’s Verbal Behavior”
4. Wednesday, 8 February – Cognitive Revolution I	Miller, “The Magical Number Seven, Plus or Minus Two”
Monday, 13 February – NO CLASS	NO CLASS
Wednesday, 15 February – NO CLASS	NO CLASS
5. Monday, 20 February – Cognitive Revolution II	Putnam, “Minds and Machines”
6. Wednesday, 22 February – Status of the Special Sciences	Fodor, “Special Sciences, or The Disunity of Science as a Working Hypothesis”
7. Monday, 27 February – Psychology and Folk Psychology I	Churchland, “Eliminative Materialism and the Propositional Attitudes”
8. Wednesday, 29 February – Psychology and Folk Psychology II	Fodor, Ch 1. of Psychosemantics
9. Monday, 5 March – Psychology and Folk Psychology III	Dennett, “True Believers: The Intentional Strategy and Why it Works”
10. Wednesday, 7 March – Computational Theory of Mind I	Excerpt from Fodor, The Language of Thought
11. Monday, 12 March – Computational Theory of Mind II	Searle, “Minds, Brains and Programs”
12. Wednesday, 14 March – Connectionism I	Rumelhart, “The Architecture of Mind: A Connectionist Approach”
13. Monday, 19 March – Connectionism II	Fodor and Pylyshyn, “Connectionism and Cognitive Architecture: A Critical Analysis” <b>MIDTERM PAPER DUE</b>
14. Wednesday, 21 March – Nativism I	Laurence and Margolis, “The Poverty of

	the Stimulus Argument”
15. Monday, 26 March – Nativism II	Excerpt from Cowie, “What’s Within”
16. Wednesday, 28 March – Modularity of Mind I	Excerpt from Fodor, The Modularity of Mind
17. Monday, 2 April – Modularity of Mind II	Prinz, “Is the Mind Really Modular?”
Wednesday, 4 April – Ching Ming Festival – NO CLASS	NO CLASS
Mon, 9 April – Easter Holiday – NO CLASS	NO CLASS
18. Wednesday, 11 April – Concepts: Classical Theory	Laurence and Margolis, “Concepts and Cognitive Science”
19. Monday, 16 April – Concepts: Prototypes I	Rosch, “Principles of Categorization”
20. Wednesday, 18 April – Concepts: Prototypes II	Fodor and Lepore, “The Red Herring and the Pet Fish – Why Concepts Still can’t be Prototypes”
21. Monday, 23 April – Concepts: Atomism	Excerpt from Fodor, Concepts: Where Cognitive Science Went Wrong
22. Wednesday, 25 April – Theory of Mind I	Gopnik and Wellman, “Why the Child’s Theory of Mind is Really a Theory”
23. Monday, 30 April – Theory of Mind II	Goldman, “Interpretation Psychologized”
24. Wednesday, 2 May – Rationality	Samuels, Stich, and Tremoulet, “Rethinking Rationality” <b>FINAL PAPER DUE WED., 16 MAY</b>

**IMPORTANT NOTE**

**“Students shall be aware of the University regulations about dishonest practice in course work and the possible consequences as stipulated in the Regulations Governing University Examinations.”**