Lingnan University
Department of Philosophy

Course Title : Philosophy of Psychology
Course Code : PHI4399J
Recommended Study Year : 2-4 Years
No. of Credits/Term : 3
Mode of Tuition : Sectional
Class Contact Hours : 3 hours/week
Category in Major Programme : Program Elective – Special Topics
Prerequisite(s) : N/A
Co-requisite(s) : N/A
Exclusion(s) : N/A
Exemption Requirement(s) : N/A

Brief 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 philosophical views on the relation between mind and body. We will then examine the relationship between commonsense and scientific views of the mind. From there, we will examine 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.

Aims
The aim of the course is to survey basic issues in philosophy of psychology. Through introduction to these issues, students will gain insight into the connections between philosophy and the empirical discipline of psychology; more generally, this will increase students’ understanding of the connections between philosophy and the sciences.

Learning Outcomes
Students will learn to:
1) Identify and understand major approaches to the mind-body problem
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

Indicative Content
1) Introduction to the mind-body problem
2) Behaviorism
3) Identity theory
4) Functionalism
5) Folk psychology vs. scientific psychology
6) Eliminative materialism
7) Special sciences vs. ‘hard’ sciences
8) Computational theory of mind
9) Connectionism
10) Modularity of mind
11) Concepts: classical theory
12) Concepts: prototypes
13) Concepts: atomism
14) Theory of mind: theory-theory
15) Theory of mind: simulation
16) Rationality

Teaching Method
The course will be in lecture format, with heavy emphasis on discussion.

Measurement of Learning Outcomes
Students will be assessed on the basis of a mid-term and a final paper (LO’s 1-7), as well as on course attendance and participation, which may include contribution to online discussions outside of class (LO’s 1-7).

Assessment
Mid-term paper: 30%
Final paper: 50%
Participation and attendance: 20%

Required Readings

Required Text

Other required readings
Smolensky, P., “On the Proper Treatment of Connectionism,” Behavioral and Brain Sciences, 11,
Waston, J., “Psychology as the behaviorist views it,” Psychological Review, 20, 158-177, 1913.

**Supplementary Readings**


**Important Notes**

1. Students are expected to spend a total of 9 hours (i.e. 3 hours of class contact and 6 hours of personal study) per week to achieve the course learning outcomes.

2. Students shall be aware of the University regulations about dishonest practice in course work, tests and examinations, and the possible consequences as stipulated in the Regulations Governing University Examinations. In particular, plagiarism, being a kind of dishonest practice, is “the presentation of another person’s work without proper acknowledgement of the source, including exact phrases, or summarised ideas, or even footnotes/citations, whether protected by copyright or not, as the student’s own work”. Students are required to strictly follow university regulations governing academic integrity and honesty.

3. Students are required to submit writing assignment(s) using Turnitin.

4. To enhance students’ understanding of plagiarism, a mini-course “Online Tutorial on Plagiarism Awareness” is available on https://pla.ln.edu.hk/