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, 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%

**Required Readings**

**Required Text**

**Other required readings**

**Supplementary Readings**


