

PSYC82 — Theoretical Psychology. Fall 2003

Wednesdays, 7-9pm, B382

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Course Description:

This course aims to cover both questions *about* theoretical psychology, as well as issues *within* it. The first half of the course will cover some of the tools, concepts and methods of theoretical psychology — topics will include the relation between psychology and philosophy, the nature of psychological laws and explanations, and some basic philosophy of science. We will then study some actual theoretical psychology by considering the successive 'paradigms' of classical, connectionist and dynamical cognitive science, as well as foundational issues from neuropsychology and psychiatry. Readings will be drawn from a package of a variety of authors in cognitive science and its sub-disciplines. Emphasis will be placed on understanding both the arguments these authors advance, and how their theoretical concerns are related to experimental work.

Texts:

- 1) Required: Course Reader
- 2) Recommended: Kukla, A. (2001) *Methods of Theoretical Psychology* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press) [N.B. This Book is on 1-hr in-house reserve at the library]

Evaluation:

- 1) Midterm take-home test. 40%.
 - From a list of five questions, you may choose any two to write on. You must write no more than three sides per question.
 - Questions will be distributed in class on October 15th.
 - Answers are due in class on October 22nd.
 - Late submissions will ONLY be accepted by e-mail.
 - Late submissions will be deducted one grade point per day (including weekends) -- e.g. a one-day-late A- is recorded as A, a three-day-late C+ becomes a D+ etc.
- 2) Final exam. 60%. 3 hrs. Short answer and essay questions.

N.B. Final grade may be modified upwards by up to 5% based on class participation and attendance.

Schedule:

- 1) September 10: Overview
- 2) September 17: Conceptual tools.
- 3) September 24: Philosophy of Mind
- 4) October 1: The relation between philosophy and psychology
- 5) October 8: Psychological laws
- 6) October 15: Psychological Explanation
- Take home test questions distributed

- 7) October 22: Classical cognitive science
- *Take home test answers due*
- 8) October 29: Connectionism
- *Take home test grades returned*
- 9) November 5: Dynamicism
- 10) November 12: Embodied/Embedded cognition
- 11) November 19: Cognitive Neuropsychology
- 12) November 26: Classification & the DSM-IV

Other dates to note:

- November 3: Last day to drop F classes
- November 13: Final exam schedule published
- December 2-5: Study break
- December 8-19: Final exam period.

Some other useful stuff on the web:

Some of you will be unfamiliar with the more philosophical readings. If this is the case, I strongly recommend you take a look at Jim Pryor's excellent advice on "How to Read a Philosophy Paper". Take a look at:

- <http://www.princeton.edu/~jimpryor/general/reading.html>

Andre Kukla's excellent (2001) book *Methods of Theoretical Psychology* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press) may be read and saved, but not printed, from its electronic incarnation at no cost to you. You must be using a U of T proxy server or equivalent (for details, see the course webpage). Take a look at:

- <http://cognet.mit.edu/library/books/book.tcl?isbn=0262112612>

For some useful advice on managing sources, and how to avoid both plagiarism and its consequences, take a look at:

- <http://www.chass.utoronto.ca/~nscharer/plagmain.html>

Not sure what a philosophical term means? Take a look at Chris Eliasmith's *Dictionary of Philosophy of Mind*:

- <http://www.artsci.wustl.edu/~philos/MindDict/dictindex.html>

Some other books that you might find interesting or useful:

Bem, S and Looren de Jong, H (1997) *Theoretical Issues in Psychology* (London: Sage)
- A good introduction to philosophy of science and philosophy of mind for psychologists. Aimed at someone with little or no philosophical background.

Baggini, J and Fosl, P.S. (2003) *The Philosopher's Toolkit* (Oxford: Blackwell)
- A guide to the ways and means of constructing and evaluating philosophical arguments, together with examples.

Flanagan, O. (1991) *The Science of the Mind* (2nd Ed.) (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press)
- A thorough and well written book covering all aspects of the intersection of philosophy and psychology.