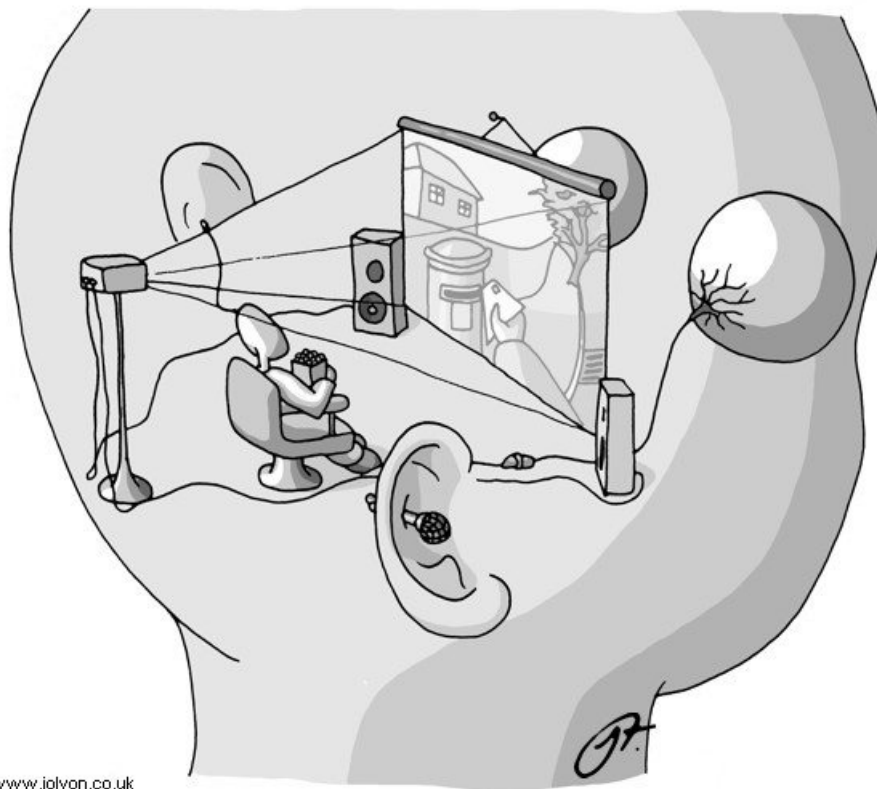


# Philosophy of Psychology DRAFT: Subject to Change

Summer 2019: A Session

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## Course Overview

Psychology is the systematic study of thought and intelligent behavior. In this course, we will look at some of the conceptual foundations underpinning such a discipline. One central difficulty in studying the mind is that two conceptual frameworks seem applicable, and it is unclear how, and whether, these should be integrated. On the one hand, minded creatures are assumed to be parts of the natural world, and as such their behavior should be governed by natural laws. On the other, minded behavior appears to be *rational*, i.e. predictably responsive to the beliefs and desires of the creature whose behavior it is. This latter way of viewing minded behavior seems to be normative: creatures are not merely buffeted around by physical forces, but behave in ways appropriate to the situation. Contemporary psychology has not shown that one or the other of these conceptual schemes is the correct one. Instead, both seem appropriate, and the tension between them is downplayed. We will look at various debates about the nature of the mind, as discussed in the psychological literature, with an eye to understanding these two perspectives.

Questions we will ask will include:

- How is the mind organized? Is it a relatively homogenous system, or is it broken down into many distinct units?
- To what degree is the structure of the developed (adult) mind a product of biologically given traits?
- What is the relationship between the mind and the brain? What is the relationship between the study of the mind (psychology) and the study of the brain (neuroscience)?
- What is the force of the popular ‘challenge from embodiment’ to classical psychological theories? Is viewing the mind as an information processing system doomed to failure due to its abstracting away from the environment in which minded organisms exist?

## Course Difficulty

While there are no prerequisites for this course, it will be intellectually demanding—requiring you to master novel theoretical concepts and critically engage with complex arguments in your own writing. In short: the class is not an easy A. As with many other courses, to do well in Phil 129 you will need to:

- Attend lectures regularly and take (mental or physical) notes;
- Attend sections regularly and engage in discussion;
- Complete all the course readings, slowly and carefully, typically multiple times;

- Work hard on your papers, including proof-reading and re-drafting multiple times, and submit them on time.
- **Optional, but highly recommended:** Meet with me to discuss questions regarding the course material or your paper topics.

This class is not about memorizing facts or correctly reproducing slogans; this class is about developing your own opinions and critical perspective on the topics discussed and enriching your ability to articulate and defend those opinions in a written form. Students who are prepared to work hard, challenge themselves, and attend lecture and section regularly will do well.

For pro-tips on reading and writing philosophy:

<https://sites.google.com/a/wellesley.edu/pinkguidetophilosophy/>

## Course Materials

There will be no official textbook for the course. All of the required readings will be available digitally through the course webpage. Please check the course website regularly for updates.

## Course Requirements

1. **Paper 1:** 10% of final grade.
2. **Paper 2:** 30% of final grade.
3. **Final Paper Essay Plan:** 5% of final grade.
4. **Final Paper:** 45% of final grade.
5. **Attendance and Participation;** 10% of final grade.
6. **Be familiar with and abide by UCLA's policy on Academic Integrity:** This policy can be found at <http://www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu/Academic-Integrity>
  - Students needing an academic accommodation based on a disability should notify the Center for Accessible Education (CAE) located at (310) 825-1501 or A255 Murphy Hall. When possible, students should contact the CAE within the first two weeks of the quarter, as reasonable notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. For more information visit <https://www.cae.ucla.edu/>
  - Unless requested by the Office for Students with Disabilities, ***The use of computers, phones, and tablets is not allowed in lecture.*** This component of the course's requirements is not intended to be mean or punitive, but rather to aid your understanding — and the understanding of those around you — of the contents of the lectures.

7. **Late assignments:** Late papers will be docked by 1/3 of a letter grade for every 24 hour period after the due date. There will be no credit for late essay plans. Extensions may be granted if you have a valid reason.

## **Waitlist**

In order to keep the class size manageable, and ensure that each enrolled student receives the attention to which they are entitled, I will not be giving out PTE numbers. If you are on the waitlist, the only way for you to get into the class is for someone to drop the class; you are thus advised to find a back-up class as soon as possible.

## **Classroom Etiquette**

Classroom participation is strongly encouraged. The best way to learn philosophy is to *do* philosophy, and this involves discussion and argumentation, in the flesh as well as in written work. Such discussion may get heated and this is OK. However, what is not OK is behavior that discourages other students from engaging. Finding the line between passionate debate and personal attack is a vital skill for anyone in or outside of academia.

All other students in the classroom must be treated respectfully, as peers engaged in a collective activity. Behavior that will not be tolerated includes, but is not limited to: dismissing another student's opinion, talking over another student, personal attacks etc. In short: Don't be a jerk. Class discussion is every student's opportunity to engage with the material, and behavior which impedes this will not be tolerated.

## **Course Papers**

You will be assigned three papers, in increasing order of length and difficulty. The idea is that you will gradually build up your philosophical skills of exegesis, argumentation, and novel contribution to philosophical inquiry. I will provide detailed feedback. In order to do well in this course, you will need to incorporate this feedback into later work.

### **Paper 1**

A prompt for paper 1 will be assigned in the first lecture of week 2, to be submitted by Midnight on Sunday before Week 3. This paper will be purely exegetical. You will describe a position or argument we have looked at in as clear terms as possible. This paper will be 1-2 pages long, double-spaced.

### **Paper 2**

A prompt for paper 2 will be assigned in the second lecture of Week 3, to be submitted by midnight on the Saturday before Week 5. This paper will involve both explaining a

particular debate we have examined, and explaining in detail which side of the debate you find most plausible. This paper will be 3-4 pages long, double-spaced.

## Final Paper

For the final paper, the topic will not be assigned (although I am willing to help you find one). Once you have settled on a topic, you must check with me or your TA that this topic is suitable. You may choose any topic relevant to the issues we have discussed in this course. As this paper is the largest chunk of your grade of any single piece of work, it is highly recommended that you start thinking about this paper fairly early in the course, and begin discussions with me no later than week 4. An essay plan, of about 1 page, must be submitted by Midnight on Friday of Week 5. This paper should be 5-6 pages long, double-spaced, and should contribute to debates about the foundations of psychology in a novel and informed way.

## Reading Schedule

Readings marked with a '\*' are recommended, but not required. Reading 1 is to be read before Tuesday's lecture. Reading 2 is to be read before Thursday's lecture.

### Week 1: Introduction. What is Psychology?

1. Dennett, D. *Skinner Skinned* (1978)
  2. Cummins, R. "How Does it Work?" vs. "What are the Laws?" *Two Conceptions of Psychological Explanation* (2000)
- \* Kitcher, P. *Marr's Computational Theory of Vision* (1988)

### Week 2: Modularity

1. Excerpts from Fodor, J.A. *The Modularity of Mind* (1983)
    - Paper 1 prompt assigned.
  2. Prinz, J. *Is the Mind Really Modular?* (2006)
- \* Cosmides, L. and Tooby, J. *Origins of Domain Specificity: The Evolution of Functional Organization* (1994)
- Paper 1 due Sunday (07/06) at Midnight.

### Week 3: Nativism and Empiricism 1: What is Innateness?

1. Griffiths, P. *What is Innateness?* (2001)
  - Paper 2 prompt assigned.
2. Excerpts from Cowie, F. *What's Within? Nativism Reconsidered* (1998)

\* Adams, R. *Where do our Ideas Come From? Descartes vs. Locke* (1975)

Week 4: Nativism and Empiricism 2: What is Innate?

1. Pietroski, P. and Crain, S. *The Language Faculty* (2012)
  2. Excerpts from Cowie, F. *What's Within? Nativism Reconsidered* (1998)
- \* Fodor, J.A. *Doing Without What's Within. Fiona Cowie's Critique of Nativism* (2001)
- Paper 2 due Saturday (07/19) at Midnight.

Week 5: Autonomy and Reduction

1. Excerpts from Pylyshyn, Z. *Computation and Cognition* (1984)
  2. Excerpts from Churchland, P.S. *Neurophilosophy* (1989)
- \* Fodor, J.A. *Special Sciences (Or: The Disunity of Science as a Working Hypothesis)* (1974)
- Essay plan for final paper due Friday (07/26) at Midnight.

Week 6: The Embodied Mind

1. Barrett, L. *Why Brains Are Not Computers, Why Behaviorism Is Not Satanism, and Why Dolphins Are Not Aquatic Apes* (2015)
  2. Goldinger, S. et al. *The Poverty of Embodied Cognition* (2016)
- \* Excerpts from Clark, A. *Supersizing the Mind: Embodiment, Action and Cognitive Extension* (2010)
- Final paper due on Monday 08/05 at Midnight.