

4205F/9760A
Cognitive Dimensions of Politics
Department of Political Science
The University of Western Ontario
Fall 2014

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Office Hours
Thursdays 1pm-3pm

You, your joys and your sorrows, your memories and your ambitions, your sense of personal identity and free will, are in fact no more than the behavior of a vast assembly of nerve cells and their associated molecules.... No longer need one spend time...[enduring] the tedium of philosophers perpetually disagreeing with each other. Consciousness is now largely a scientific problem.

Francis Crick

The brain –that particular body organ– is certainly critical to understanding how we work.... But if we want to understand how the brain contributes to consciousness, we need to look at the brain's job in relation to the larger nonbrain body and the environment in which we find ourselves. I urge that it is a body –and world– involving conception of ourselves that the new best science as well as philosophy should lead us to endorse.

Alva Noë

Important Notice Re: Prerequisites/Antirequisites

Please Note: You are responsible for ensuring that you have successfully completed all course prerequisites, and that you have not taken an antirequisite course. Lack of prerequisites may not be used as a basis for an appeal. If you are found to be ineligible for a course, you may be removed from it at any time and you will receive no adjustment to your fees. This decision cannot be appealed. If you find that you do not have the course prerequisites, it is in your best interest to drop the course well before the end of the add/drop period. Your prompt attention to this matter will not only help protect your academic record, but will ensure that spaces become available for students who require the course in question for graduation.
Office of the Dean, Faculty of Social Science

Rationale

Over the past three decades, cognitive science –the interdisciplinary study of mind and intelligence– has radically improved our understanding of the way in which we perceive, represent and understand reality. The knowledge generated by this relatively new field of science can no longer be ignored by political science. After all, as Mark Turner points out, social science is a mental activity that deals with human actions conditioned by individual and collective mental processes.

Social science in general, and political science in particular, must critically acknowledge and confront the impact that cognitive science is having on many of the fundamental ontological and epistemological arguments and positions that have shaped our discipline’s intellectual history. It is difficult, if not impossible, to talk today about the nature of political reality, perception, representation, concept formation, recognition, causality, objectivity, ethnocentrism, and language, without taking into consideration what cognitive science is saying about these topics.

This course has been designed as a first point of contact between students of political science and cognitive science. In this sense, the course does not require any academic background on any of the disciplines that integrate cognitive science. It will be predominantly based on academic literature that explicitly bridge cognitive and social sciences.

Course Learning Objective

The objective of this course is to *introduce* students to key ideas and debates in cognitive science that have a bearing on the ways in which we study and explain political phenomena.

Course Learning Outcomes

By the end of the semester, successful students will be able to explain and assess:

- The debate about *mental representations* and its implications for the study of politics.
- The debate about the *extended mind* and its implications for the study and understanding of social and political institutions.
- The debate about *self/other consciousness* and its implications for the study and understanding of empathy, recognition and morality.

Content and Organization

The course will be divided into five interconnected sections:

- I. Introduction: Nature, Nurture, and the Brain.
- II. The debate about *mental representations* and its implications for the study of politics.
- III. The debate about the *extended mind* and its implications for the study and understanding of social and political institutions.
- IV. The debate about *self/other consciousness* and its implications for the study and understanding of empathy and recognition.
- V. Conclusions: Political Science and Cognitive Sciences.

Prerequisites:

Political Science 2237 or 2245

Student Assessment

The overall grade for the course will be determined as follows:

Participation.....	20%
Essay.....	50%
Book Review/s.....	30%

Participation

Students in this course will be expected to master the assigned readings and to actively participate in the discussions that will take place every week. Moreover, they will be required to post a critical assessment of the assigned readings on the *Cognitive Dimensions of Politics Bulletin Board* that has been created for this purpose. Critical assessments must be posted each week by Monday at noon. One or two students will formally introduce the assigned readings each week having read the other students' critical comments on the bulletin board. Additional guidelines for these presentations will be provided by the instructor in class.

To visit the *Cognitive Dimensions of Politics Bulletin Board* on the web, go to:

<https://ca.groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/cognitivedimensions/info>

Essay

A research essay (15-17) double-spaced page will be due on December 3, 2014 IN CLASS. Guidelines for this assignment will be provided by the instructor in class.

Book Review/s:

Minimum length: 4 double-spaced pages. Maximum length: 6 double-spaced pages.

Undergraduate students will review the following book:

Nikolas Rose and Joelle M. Abi-Rached, Neuro: The New Brain Sciences and the Management of the Mind. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013.

This book review (undergraduates) is due on October 15, 2014, IN CLASS.

Graduate students will review the following two books:

Nikolas Rose and Joelle M. Abi-Rached, Neuro: The New Brain Sciences and the Management of the Mind. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013.

Daniel D. Hutto and Erik Myin, Radicalizing Enactivism: Basic Minds without Content. Cambridge Massachussets: MIT Press, 2013.

The first book review (graduates) is due on October 15, 2014, IN CLASS.

The second book review (graduates) is due on November 12, 2014, IN CLASS.

Guidelines for this assignment will be provided by the instructor in class.

Note: A penalty of 5% per day (including week-ends and holidays) will be imposed on any written assignment that is not handed in on time, IN CLASS.

Books Recommended for Purchase:

Daniel Lord Smail, On Deep History and the Brain. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008

Andy Clark, Supersizing the Mind: Embodiment, Action and Cognitive Extension. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Mark Johnson, Morality for Humans: Ethical Understanding from the Perspective of Cognitive Science. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2014.

Movies Recommended: Consult the *Cognitive Science Movie Index*:
<https://www.indiana.edu/~cogfilms/>

Support Services

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

OUTLINE AND READING MATERIAL

I. Introduction: Nature, Nurture, and the Brain

September 10: Introduction to the course: Political Science: The Case of the Absent Brain.

September 17: Nature, Nurture, and the Brain (I)

Daniel Lord Smail, On Deep History and the Brain. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008, 12-156.

Optional:

Evelyn Fox Keller, The Mirage of a Space Between Nature and Nurture. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010, 1-30.

September 24: Nature, Nurture, and the Brain (II)

Joseph LeDoux, Synaptic Self: How Our Brains Become Who We Are. London: Penguin, 2002, 1-32.

David D. Franks, Neurosociology: The Nexus Between Neuroscience and Social Psychology. New York: Springer, 2010, 21-38

Edward O. Wilson and Daniel C. Dennett, "Evolutionary Philosophy," in Adam Bly, ed., Science is Culture. New York: Harper Perennial, 2010, 1-22.

Optional:

Daniel C. Dennett, "The Evolution of Culture," in John Brockman, ed., Culture. New Daniel York: Harper Perennial, 2011, 1-26.

II. Nurture/Nature: The Debate About Mental Representations and its Implications for Political Science

October 1: Mental Representations: Basic Definitions/Interpretations

Barbara Von Eckardt, "The Representational Theory of Mind," in Keith Frankish, ed., The Cambridge Handbook of Cognitive Science. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, 29-49.

Paul Thagard, "Cognitive Structures," in Keith Frankish, ed., The Cambridge Handbook of Cognitive Science. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, 50-72.

David Pitt, "Mental Representation", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2013 Edition), Edward N. Zalta, ed., forthcoming URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2013/entries/mental-representation/>.

October 8: Mental Representations: Models, Schemas and Concepts

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, Metaphors we Live By. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003, 3-32.

Gregory L. Murphy and Aaron B. Hoffman, "Concepts," in Keith Frankish, ed., The Cambridge Handbook of Cognitive Science. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, 151-170.

Eric Margolis and Stephen Laurence, "The Ontology of Concepts –Abstract Objects or Mental Representations?" In Noûs, Volume 41, Issue 4, December 2007, 561–593.

Optional:

George Lakoff, "Philosophy in the Flesh," in John Brockman, ed., The Mind. New York: Harper Perennial, 2011, 11-30.

October 15: Emotions and Mental Representations

Joseph Ledoux, The Emotional Brain. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996, 1-72.

Gregory Johnson, "Theories of Emotion," Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2009, <http://www.iep.utm.edu/emotion/>

Luiz Pessoa. "Précis of The Cognitive-Emotional Brain," Behavioral and Brain Sciences, June 2014, 1-66.

Optional:

Antonio Damasio, Looking for Spinoza: Joy, Sorrow, and the Feeling Brain. New York: Harcourt Inc., 2003, 3-80.

III. Nurture/Nature: The Debate About the Extended Mind and its Implications for the Study and Understanding of Culture and Institutions

October 22: The Extended Mind

Andy Clark and David Chalmers, "Appendix: The Extended Mind," in Andy Clark, Supersizing the Mind: Embodiment, Action and Cognitive Extension. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, 220-231.

Frederick R. Adams & Kenneth Aizawa, "Defending the Bounds of Cognition," in Richard Menary, ed., The Extended Mind. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT University Press, 2010, 67-80

Mark Rowlands, The New Science of the Mind: From Extended Mind to Embodied Phenomenology. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2010, 1-54.

October 29: Culture, Institutions and the Brain

Jesse Prinz, "Culture and Cognitive Science", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2011 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2011/entries/culture-cogsci/>.

Nikolas Rose and Joelle M. Abi-Rached, Neuro: The New Brain Sciences and the Management of the Mind. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013, 110-198.

Optional:

Bruce E. Wexler, Brain and Culture: Neurobiology, Ideology, and Social Change. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2006, 1-36.

Shaun Gallagher, "The Socially Extended Mind," Cognitive Systems Research, Vol. 25-26, December 2013, 4-12.
<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1389041713000272>

November 5: The Scaffolded Mind

Kim Sterelny, "Minds: Extended or Scaffolded?" Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences, Volume 9, Issue 4, December 2010, 465-481.

Andy Clark, Supersizing the Mind: Embodiment, Action and Cognitive Extension. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, 1-84.

Optional:

Lawrence E. Williams et al., "The Scaffolded Mind: Higher Mental Processes are Grounded in Early Experience of the Physical World," European Journal of Social Psychology, No. 39, 2009, 1257-1267.

IV. The Debate About Self/Other Consciousness and its Implications for the Study and Understanding of Morality and Justice.

November 12: Self/Other Consciousness

Susan Blackmore, Consciousness: A Very Short Introduction. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, 1-81.

Alva Noë, Out of Our Heads: Why You Are Not Your Brain, and Other Lessons from the Biology of Consciousness. New York: Hill and Wang, 2010, 1-24.

Diana Meyers, "Feminist Perspectives on the Self", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2010 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2010/entries/feminism-self/>>.

Optional:

Bloch, Maurice (2010) "Reconciling social science and cognitive science notions of the 'self'". LSE Research Online. [http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/29447/1/Reconciling_Social_Science_and_Cognitive_\(LSERO\).pdf](http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/29447/1/Reconciling_Social_Science_and_Cognitive_(LSERO).pdf)

Greg Eghigian, Andreas Killen and Christine Leuenberger, "The Self as Project: Politics and the Human Sciences", Osiris, Vol. 22, 2007, 1-25.

November 19: Morality

Patricia S. Churchland, Braintrust: What Neuroscience Tells Us about Morality. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011, 1-26.

Mark Johnson, Morality for Humans: Ethical Understanding from the Perspective of Cognitive Science. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2014.

Optional:

Kristen Renwick Monroe, "Cognition and Moral Choice," in Ron Sun, ed., Grounding Social Sciences in Cognitive Sciences. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2012, 183-205.

Mauricio Meloni, "On the Growing Intellectual Authority of Neuroscience for Political and Moral Theory: Sketch for a Genealogy," in Frank Vander Valk, ed., Essays on Neuroscience and Political Theory: Thinking the Body Politic. London and New York: Routledge, 2012, 25-49.

November 26: Empathy, Recognition, and Justice

V. S. Ramachandran, The Tell-Tale Brain: A Neuroscientist's Quest for What Makes Us Human. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2012, 3-40.

Gregory Hickok, The Myth of Mirror Neurons: The Real Neuroscience of Communication and Cognition. New York: W.W. Horton, 2014, 1-76.

Julie Connolly, Michael Leach and Lucas Walsh, eds., Recognition in Politics: Theory, Policy and Practice. Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007, 1-15.

Optional:

Christian Keysers, The Empathic Brain Paperback. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform: 2011.

V. Conclusions

December 3: The Social and Neurobiological Construction of Reality

Jorge Luis Borges, "The Circular Ruins," in Douglas R. Hofstadter and Daniel C. Dennett, eds., The Mind's I: Fantasies and Reflections on Self and Soul. New York: Basic Books, 1981, 344-347.

Jan Slaby, Philipp Haueis, and Suparna Choudhury, "Neuroscience as Applied Hermeneutics: Towards a Critical Neuroscience of Political Theory," in Frank Vander Valk, ed., Essays on Neuroscience and Political Theory: Thinking the Body Politic. London and New York: Routledge, 2012, 50-73.

Optional:

Gerald M. Edelman, Second Nature: Brain Science and Human Knowledge, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006, 68-87.

(Graduate) Statement of Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:
http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf