

Politics 9760A
Cognitive Dimensions of Politics
Department of Political Science
The University of Western Ontario
Fall 2016

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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 the nature of *political reality*.
- 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.

Student Assessment

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

Participation.....	20%
Essay.....	50%
Book Reviews (15% each).....	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 (20-25) double-spaced page will be due on December 2, 2015 **IN CLASS**. The instructor will provide guidelines for this assignment in class.

Book Reviews:

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

Students will review two of the following books:

Joshua Greene, Moral Tribes: Emotion, Reason, and the Gap Between Us and Them. New York: Penguin, 2013.

Joseph E LeDoux, Anxious: The Modern Mind in the Age of Anxiety. New York: Viking, 2015.

Jonathan Haidt, The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion. New York: Vintage Books, 2013.

The book review is due on November 11, 2015, **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:

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

Keith Frankish, ed., The Cambridge Handbook of Cognitive Science. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

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

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

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

Paul Thagard, "Why Cognitive Science Needs Philosophy and Vice Versa," Topics in Cognitive Science, No. 1, 2009, 237-254.

John T. Jost, et al., "Political Neuroscience: The Beginning of a Beautiful Friendship," Advances in Political Psychology, Vol. 35, No.1, 2014, 3-42.

September 19: Nature, Nurture, and the Brain (I)

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

J. H. Kaas, "The Evolution of Brains from Early Mammals to Humans," Wiley Interdisciplinary Review of Cognitive Science, January, Vol. 4, No. 1, 2013, 33-45.

Recommended:

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

Neil Shubin, The Universe Within: The Deep History of the Human Body. New York: Vintage, 2013.

September 26: Nature, Nurture, and the Brain (II)

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

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.

David S. Moore, "Current Thinking About Nature and Nurture," in Kostas Kampourakis, ed., The Philosophy of Biology: A Companion for Educators. New York: Springer, 2013, 629-652.

Recommended:

Sean Carroll, The Big Picture: On the Origins of Life, Meaning and the Universe Itself. New York: Dutton, 2016.

Leonard Mlodinow, The Upright Thinkers: The Human Journey from Living in Trees to Understanding the Cosmos. New York: Pantheon Books, 2015.

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

October 3: Mental Representations: Basic Definitions/Interpretations

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

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.

Orly Fuhrman and Lera Boroditsky, "Cross-Cultural Differences in Mental Representations of Time: Evidence From an Implicit Nonlinguistic Task," Cognitive Science, No. 34, 2010, 1430-1451.

Recommended:

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

October 10: Thanksgiving

October 17: Mental Representations: Models, Schemas, Concepts and Memes

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.

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

Susan Blackmore, "The Power of Memes," Scientific American, October, 2000, 64-73.

Susan Blackmore, "The Third Replicator", The New York Times, August 22, 2010.

Jeremy Trevelyan Burman, "The Misunderstanding of Memes: Biography of an Unscientific Object", Perspectives on Science, 2012, 75-104.

Recommended:

Susan Carey, The Origins of Concepts. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Eric Margolis and Stephen Laurence, eds., The Conceptual Mind: New Directions in the Study of Concepts. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2015.

October 24: Emotions and Mental Representations

Jesse Prinz, "Emotion," in Keith Frankish, ed., The Cambridge Handbook of Cognitive Science. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, 193-211.

Joseph E. Le Doux, "Feelings: What are They and How Does the Brain Make Them?" Daedalus, The Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Science, Vol. 144, No. 1, Winter, 2015, 96-111.

L. M. Hartling, E. Lindner, U. Spalthoff and M. Britton, "Humiliation: A Nuclear Bomb of Emotions?" Psicología Política, Nº 46, 2013, 55-76.

Scientific American Mind, "Beyond Fear: The Psychology of Terrorism." Special Report. May/June 2016, 35-49.

Recommended:

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

Joseph E LeDoux, Anxious: The Modern Mind in the Age of Anxiety. New York: Viking, 2015.

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

October 31: The Extended Mind

Andy Clark, "Embodied, embedded, and extended cognition," in Keith Frankish, ed., The Cambridge Handbook of Cognitive Science. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, 275-291.

Andreas Elpidorou, "Where is my mind?" AVANT, Vol. III, No. 1, 2012, 145-160.

Tamer Soliman and Arthur M. Glenberg, "The Embodiment of Culture," in Lawrence Shapiro, The Routledge Handbook of Embodied Cognition. New York: Routledge, 2014, 207-219.

Shaun Gallagher, "Socially Extended Mind," Cognitive Systems Research, Vols. 25-26, December 2013, 4-12.

Recommended:

Alva Noe, Varieties of Presence. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2012.

Mark Rowlands, The New Science of the Mind: From Extended Mind to Embodied Phenomenology. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2013.

November 7: Culture, Institutions and the Brain

Bruce E. Wexler, Brain and Culture: Neurobiology, Ideology, and Social Change. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2008, 39-137.

Christoph Engel, "Institutions for Intuitive Man," in Christoph Engel, et al., Better than Conscious? Decision Making, the Human Mind and Implications for Institutions. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2008, 391-412

Giovanna Colombetti and Joel Krueger, "Scaffoldings of the Affective Mind," Philosophical Psychology, Vol. 28, No. 8, 2015, 1157-1176.

Recommended:

Mark Pagel, Wired for Culture: Origins of the Human Social Mind. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2012.

November 14: The Scaffolded Mind

Bruce E. Wexler, Brain and Culture: Neurobiology, Ideology, and Social Change. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2008, 141-253.

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.

Kim Sterelny, "Minds: Extended or Scaffolded?" Phenomenology and the

Cognitive Sciences, Volume 9, Issue 4, December 2010, 465-481.

Recommended:

L. Caporael, J. Griesemer and W. Wimsatt, eds., Developing Scaffolding in Evolution, Cognition, and Culture. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2014

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

November 21: Self/Other Consciousness

William G. Lycan, "Consciousness," in Lawrence Shapiro, The Routledge Handbook of Embodied Cognition. New York: Routledge, 2014, 212-234.

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.

Willett, Cynthia, Anderson, Ellie and Meyers, Diana, "Feminist Perspectives on the Self," The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Fall 2015 Edition..

Hanna Meretoja, "Philosophical Underpinnings of the Narrative Turn in Theory and Fiction," in Mari Hatawara, Lars-Christer Hydén and Matti Hyvärinen, The Travelling Concepts of Narrative, 2013, 93-117

Recommended:

Felipe Fernández-Armesto, So You Think You're Human? Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Monte Reel, Between Man and Beast. New York: Doubleday: 2013.

December 28: Morality

Mark Johnson, Morality for Humans: Ethical Understanding from the Perspective of Cognitive Science. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2014, 1-111.

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

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.

Joshua D. Greene, "The Cognitive Neuroscience of Moral Judgment and Decision Making," in Jean Decety and Thalia Wheatley, eds., The Moral Brain: A Multidisciplinary Perspective. MIT University Press, 2015, 197-220.

Recommended:

Joshua Greene, Moral Tribes: Emotion, Reason, and the Gap Between Us and Them. New York: Penguin, 2013.

December 5: Empathy, Recognition, and Justice

Mark Johnson, Morality for Humans: Ethical Understanding from the Perspective of Cognitive Science. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2014, 112-221.

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.

N. Ann Rider, "The Perils of Empathy: Holocaust Narratives, Cognitive Studies and the Politics of Sentiment," Holocaust Studies: A Journal of Culture and History, Vol. 19, No. 3, 2013, 43-72.

David DeSteno, "Compassion and Altruism: How our Minds Determine Who is Worthy of Help," Current Opinion in Behavioral Sciences, Vol. 3, June 2015, 80-83.

Recommended:

Stephen S. Hall, Wisdom: From Philosophy to Neuroscience. New York: Vintage Books, 2011.