Syllabus
Psychology 855     Spring, 2004
History & Systems                           Weiss Hall 704
Tuesdays 10-1                                

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Office Hours:                     Tues: 9-10, 1-2; Th 10-11
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Readings

JANUARY 20 – INTRODUCTION

JANUARY 27 – READINGS I (1-2)

I.  Historical Perspectives and Epistemological Issues

1.  OVERTON, W. F. (2003). DEVELOPMENT ACROSS THE LIFE SPAN: PHILOSOPHY, CONCEPTS,
    THEORY.  IN: R. M. LERNER, M A. EASTERBROOKS, & J. MISTRY (EDS.) COMPREHENSIVE
    EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: IRVING B. WEINER.   NEW YORK: WILEY
Overview of main themes of the course.  Metatheoretical assumptions and worldviews.

    [PP 18-70] PRESCIENTIFIC PSYCHOLOGY).
Greek thought and issues that arise later. Rationalism, Empiricism, & Associationism.

FEBRUARY 3: READINGS (3-4)

    SADDLE RIVER, NJ (5TH ED.) CHS. 7 & 8
Ch. 7: Mental Passivity: The British Tradition (Locke, Berkeley, Hume, Split)
Ch. 8: Mental Activity: The German Tradtion (Leibniz, Kant, Relational)
   a. Theories of mind. From subjectivity to objectivity. The movement from Descartes 'subjectivity' of thinking to Kant's demonstration that "we can only make sense of a series of experiences bound together in a single consciousness if we can distinguish that subjective series of experiences from an objective realm."
   b. Kant's view that connectedness of experience is produced by activity of mind. Kant's model of mind in terms of a relatively passive faculty of the Sensibility and the active faculty of the Understanding. Problem that passive faculty of Sensibility means that this receptive faculty is receiving something outside of experience. Hence the problem of the thing-in-itself.
   c. Hegel's move from objectivity to ontology. Most importantly he accepts Kantian active thought as self-consciousness and distinguishes two moments of consciousness. These are the 'moment of knowledge' (notion) and the 'moment of truth' (or object). Critically, the distinction between the knowledge we have of some object (moment of knowledge) and what that object is 'in itself' (moment of truth) is a distinction that occurs within consciousness. (See Piaget and others on differentiation of subject and object poles in consciousness) This is the key to constructivism. Also it explains how knowledge progresses; how knowledge is an achievement. The moment of knowledge and moment of truth move toward an identity.
   d. Good section on the distinction between a correspondence theory of truth (empiricists) and a coherence theory of truth (Hegel).

February 10: Readings (5)

Overview of the Lockean-Humean realist mechanical model as it developed from Newton to modern psychology.

February 17: Readings (6-8)

   Psychology as a natural science – structuralism (Locke-Hume)
   Psychology as a social science – act psychology (Leibniz-Kant-Hegel)
   American functionalism (From Leibniz-Kant-Hegel to Locke-Hume)

   Gestalt – A Leibniz-Kant but not Hegel example.
   Behaviorism -- A The Lockean-Humean example.

   Phenomenology and Humanism – The person-centered perspective.

February 24: Readings (9-11)
a 20th century Kantian-Hegelian humanistic movement. From Gestalt to Freud to Sullivan to Existentialism

Note the shift of "the determination of behavior from autonomous man to the environment" and the abolishment of "inner man" is a movement away from necessary organization (Leibnizian-Kantian-Hegelian position) to uniformity (Lockean-Humean). Note how many of the things Skinner says sound exactly like what David Hume said. Note the way all higher levels activity (cognition, thinking, attention) are reduced to lower levels. Note how this is a split position.

The Cognitive Revolution originated as a reaction against split behaviorism, but was soon taken over by another mechanical metaphor -- the computer -- as its model. This led to another split approach. See its implications and what Bruner is suggesting as a change to get back on track. Note the notion of man constructing meaning, is a person-centered position.

MARCH 2: READINGS (12-13)

Comparison of Mind as a computer and mind as embodiment.

A comparison of an atomistic perspective and a relational perspective on evolutionary psychology, cognitive science, and culture theory.

MARCH 9: SPRING BREAK

MARCH 16: MIDTERM EXAM

II. Accounts of the Nature of Science and Scientific Methodology: Beyond Objectivism and Relativism.

MARCH 23: READINGS (14)

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Briefly skim again
MARCH 30: READINGS (15)


APRIL 6: READINGS (16-18)


APRIL 13: READINGS (19)

An analysis of the nature and history of ontological splitting. How to move from an Absolute foundationalism (modernity); not to an Absolute relativism (postmodernity); but rather to a Relative relativism (amodernity, i.e., a relational metanarrative)

APRIL 20: READINGS TBA

APRIL 27: REVIEW

MAY 4: FINAL

III. Presuppositions, Models, and Metaphors in Psychological Issues.
OPTIONAL READINGS


COURSE REQUIREMENTS

This course is designed as a Ph.D level overview of the historical antecedents and metatheoretical bases of contemporary psychological theory and research. The guiding theme of the course is the proposition that all theory and methods that frame scientific observations have been constructed upon a ground of metatheoretical assumptions. The objective of the course is to examine and evaluate these assumptions and their historical origins as the assumptions impact on contemporary psychological thought and research.

The requirements for this course includes one or more in class exam and exams will account for 70% of the grade and class participation will account for 30%. Participants are expected to read and be able to discuss each week's reading prior to the class meeting. By no later than each Monday at 5:00PM each class member will also be expected to e-mail me a short review of the major points of the week's readings. The object is to demonstrate that you have engaged the material and recognize the broad themes being developed. Attendance is expected as all classes and active participation is required.

Dates, Readings, Exams are subject to change at the instructor's discretion.

Any student who has a need for accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss the specific situation as soon as possible. (Please contact Disability Resources and Services at 215-204-1280 in 100 Ritter Annex to coordinate reasonable accommodations for student with documented disabilities.)