Course Description

Recent psychological attention to consciousness and neuroscience has changed our understanding of the mentality of animals. René Descartes (1596-1650) proposed a simple model, which has dominated psychology for centuries: body and mind. He distinguished two kinds of reality: res cogitans (thinking stuff) and res extensa (extended or material stuff), and identified the res cogitans with the human mind, a supposedly spiritual substance, and he identified all else in the created world with mere matter in motion, bodies. The seventeenth century welcomed this resolution because it easily protected both religion and burgeoning modern science: Religion could attend to the spiritual matters, and science, to the material, and in no way could science legitimately challenge theology, or vice versa. This welcomed outcome was similar to that of Immanuel Kant’s (1724-1804), famous for positing “a priori categories” in the human mind that “filter” and “structure” whatever we know so that, limited by these structures, we could never know things in themselves (the ultimates of metaphysics and religion) but only our (presumably perceptual) experience of them (science). Problematically, however, Descartes’ solution collapsed everything except the spiritual into physics and granted mentality only to the human mind. In contrast, Aristotle had distinguished different kinds of realities. Beyond the merely material, degrees of higher perfections pertained: life, sensation, and conscious intelligence. So Aristotle posited three kinds of soul (psyche in the Greek = principle of activity): vegetative, sensitive, and intellectual. With Descartes’ congenial position the modern scientific reaction against Aristotle lost this nuance, so animals were not granted “souls” of any kind; animals were merely complicated machines, capable of responding to external stimuli. The squeal of a hurt animal, for example, was supposedly nothing different from the squeal of a loose belt on a machine. Animals supposedly had no kind of feelings or awareness.

Although contemporary human psychology still retains the model of body and mind, both human and animal psychology acknowledge different kinds of behaviors, processes, and capacities in the minds of animals and humans. The differences are not sorted out very well and understandably so: There exists much overlap between animal and human mind and, neuroscientifically, even among the different capacities within the brains of various species. A major goal of this course is to identify the overlaps, distinguish differences within them, and specify the cross-over from non-human to human mind. What might it be like to be a mammal without the conscious self-awareness that we humans enjoy? Through personal study,
observation, and analysis and in-class lecture, media presentations, and discussion, this course will approach this question and this goal through careful attention to current available research on animal mind, including not only cognitive, but also emotional, dimensions.

The uniqueness of this course will be the application of Bernard J. F. Lonergan’s (1904-1984) analyses of human intentional consciousness. Two facets are pertinent: a cleanly intellectual epistemology that resolves Kant’s problem of knowing the thing in itself and promises some resolution to puzzles about non-palpable mind; and a tripartite model of the human: organism, psyche, and intentional consciousness (popularly phrased as body, psyche, and spirit). This model differentiates mental “perceptual” processes (imagery, memory, emotions, conations, and personality) from conscious “intellectual” processes (experience, understanding, judgment, and decision). Additionally, sensation must be noted as the basis of perception. From a Lonerganian perspective this course will view animal mind as pure cases of psyche. The challenge is to clarify what this assertion means.

Course Objectives:
To clarify claims about animal abilities
To learn methods for concluding to internal cognitive functions
To review neural anatomy and physiology
To delineate researchable cognitive abilities (e.g., awareness, memory, imagination, self-monitoring, self-recognition, planning) and their combinations
To understand human mental functions shared with other species
To specify the uniqueness of human consciousness in light of animal mind

Learning Outcomes:
To list some main positions on the nature of consciousness and awareness
To list the key issues, questions, or problems in contemporary studies of the mind
To specify a distinction between consciousness and other aspects of the human mind
To summarize Lonergan’s theory of the structure of intentional consciousness
To highlight the centrality of human consciousness in the intellectual malaise of postmodernism
To demonstrate some philosophical acumen in assessing opinions on the mind
To defend some evidence-based, personal understanding of mind, animal and human
To elaborate some ethical implications of an elaborated understanding of mentality
To articulate personal questions remaining about the nature of mentality
To engage in respectful discussion (academic argument) over subtle and thorny topics
To hone skill in analytic reading and critical thinking
To develop speaking and writing skills adequate to subtle psychological topics
Required Texts


Other Resources


Course Requirements
- **Study readings assigned** from each class. The Course Outline below notes only the text for each of the four sections of the course. Specific readings for each class will be announced to match the pace of the class’s learning. Supplementary or alternative readings (e.g., on animal emotions, brain structures, specific competencies) may be posted in CourseDen as time permits and students request.
- **Participate in class discussions** by offering clarifications, observations, and relevant comments, by raising questions, by sharing new insights, and by suggesting potential applications.
- Work with the instructor to **find help** with any challenges the course offers.
- **Four non-cumulative exams**. Exams will be objective and will be based on the class presentations, assigned readings, and discussions. For each exam students will need a “General Purpose Answer Sheet # 229633” (large, purple/orange sheet). As a study guide, lecture slides will be posted in CourseDen.
Cheating, fabrication, and plagiarism will not be tolerated and will be subject to disciplinary action. (See Appendix A, section 2.00, of the student handbook for definitions of these forms of academic dishonesty.) Work prepared for another course or fulfilling a requirement for another course may not be used to fulfill requirements or merit extra credit in this course. This course offers no set option for make-up exams. In case of a major emergency, before the exam time the student must negotiate with the instructor some way to re-schedule the exam and later document the emergency. In such cases contact person-to-person or by phone is required.

**Course Evaluations**

**Final grades** will depend on class attendance and four exams. The exams will each constitute 1/4 of the grade. However, given the technical nature of the course material and the need for participation in class in order to grasp the material and its implications, for any student scoring an overall average of at least 64% on the exams, if it is helpful, a percentage of class attendance will be averaged into the final grade as if it were a fifth exam. Letter grades will be assigned as follows: A=90+%; B=80-89%; C=70-79%; D=60-69%; F=<60%.

A student who misses a final exam or paper and has made no prior arrangements may receive a grade of F on that exam or paper, and this result will affect the final grade in the class. A student who misses the final exam due to an emergency must contact the Psychology office at 678-839-6510 or go to Melson Hall, Room 123, as soon as possible to complete the form, “Missed Final Exam: Verification of Emergency.” The departmental Chair will need to approve this form for an incomplete grade, which may allow the time to make up the exam or complete final assignments. The student will need to provide documentation to verify the emergency.

**Extra-credit options:** In three different ways, one point for any one activity, students may earn up to three extra credit points to be added to their final percentage grade. First, by making a class "comment." A comment is a brief report about some experience (book, movie, TV show, magazine or newspaper article, conversation, event, etc.) that is relevant to the course and would be useful for the class to hear about. Half a point may be gained for sharing the experience, and another half point for explaining precisely how the issue relates to a specific topic in the course. Alternatively, one point may be gained for another type of comment: a report back to the class about some question that arose and needed follow-up research. Comments must be prearranged with the instructor. Second, by proposing multiple-choice exam questions based on course material. Two questions deemed usable by the instructor merit one extra-credit point. Third, by participating in campus activities (lectures, theatre, workshops, etc.) that relate to the course. These will be announced as the course progresses, and students are encouraged to alert the class about such events on or around campus. If the event has an official extra-credit sign-up list, the student must sign that list. In other cases, the student must submit documentation, signed by an organizer of an event, attesting to the student’s participation. Any other course-related activity, if adequately documented, could qualify for extra credit, as well. These options for extra credit pertain, again, only for students whose overall exam average is at least 64%.

Students should carefully review the information at [http://www.westga.edu/assetsDept/vpaa/Common_Language_for_Course_Syllabi.pdf](http://www.westga.edu/assetsDept/vpaa/Common_Language_for_Course_Syllabi.pdf). This link contains important material pertaining to student rights and responsibilities in this class. Because these statements are updated as federal, state, university, and accreditation standards change, students should review the information each semester.
Course Outline

Aug.  26   Introductions to the class and course.
27   Part I: Mentality, Human and Animal

Sept.  1   Helminiak,
3   Excerpts from God in the Brain
8   Part II: Research on Animal Cognition
10   Wynne & Udell
15   Animal Cognition
17   Chapters in sequence
22   Exam #1
24
29

Oct.  1
6
8
13
15

(Last day to withdraw with grade of W: Oct. 17)
20   Exam #2
22   Part III: Research on Animal Emotion
27   Beckoff
29   The Emotional Life of Animals

Nov.  3   Chapters in sequence
5
10
12   Exam #3

17   Part IV: Evolutionary Neuroscience
19   Donald, A Mind So Rare, Chapter 4, The Consciousness Club
24   Thanksgiving
26   Holiday

Dec.  1   Chapter 5, Three Levels of Basic Awareness
3   Conclusions, good-byes, and evaluations
8   Exam #4: 5:00 – 7:30 PM