COURSE SYLLABUS

Department of Psychology
University of West Georgia
PSYC 5085.01 CRN 81918 ANIMAL MIND

Melson Hall, 218
M & W 5:00 – 6:40 PM
Fall, 2014

Instructor: Daniel A. Helminiak, PhD, PhD, LPC
Contact Information: Office: Melson 203. Office hours: M & W 11:00 AM – 1:45 PM, 3:30 – 5:00, 6:45 – 7:30 PM. And by appointment. Phone: 678-839-0615 (home: 404-581-0500).
Email: dhelmini@westga.edu (Use this address, not CourseDen, and do not depend on email for a quick response). All official communication is via campus e-mail (i.e., my.westga).

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.
- **Weekly learning reports.** Each Monday submit a 1½-2-page statement that summarizes some key point(s) in the week’s classes or readings. See further details below.
- **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.

- After consultation with the instructor, submit on December 1 a **term paper** of about 12-15 pages (excluding title page and reference list), summarizing the student’s main learning in the course. The paper will be assessed on how well it demonstrates learning (e.g., by comparing before and after), exhibits deep understanding, and applies material from the course. See other details below.

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**.

**All Written Assignments** are to be typed in 12-point Times New Roman font and double-spaced on 8.5” x 11” paper, with 1” margins on the top, bottom, and sides of the pages, which must be numbered and stapled. Papers are not to deviate significantly from the required lengths without consultation with the advisor. **Weekly learning reports** should begin with the student's name, the due date, and the title of the relevant readings, all single spaced at the upper left margin. The reports must include an introductory sentence or short paragraph announcing the topic of the report. The body of the report is to be an objective summary of readings or class material on some issue(s) important to the student. A final paragraph is to be an academic response—queries, criticisms, insights, observations. One goal is to learn to separate objective summary from personal response and criticism. **The term paper** must bear a title, be organized with sections and subtitles, bear an introductory paragraph that presents the topic and outlines the paper, bear a conclusion that briefly summarizes the points made, and be documented as appropriate. Papers are to be written with correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation in professional **American English** and are to follow APA style. Students are advised to use a word processor and to run grammar and spell checks before submitting a paper. For two weeks, papers will be returned with corrections and reference numbers to the Basic Guidelines for Writing (in CourseDen). If numerous errors in these areas persist, papers will be rejected and returned for rewriting.

**Course Evaluations**

**Final grades** will depend on four exams, weekly learning reports, and the term paper. The exams will constitute 4/5 of the grade. The weekly reports, graded as A, B, C (= 95%, 85%, 75%) or Unacceptable will be averaged to constitute 1/5 of the grade. Letter grades will be assigned as follows: A=90+%; B=80-89%; C=70-79%; D=60-69%; F=<60%. Term papers will affect the final letter grade by raising it one letter (if possible), sustaining it as computed, or lowering it one letter.

A student who misses a final exam 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.

Students should carefully review the information at 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, *Minds 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