PSYC 3202 – History and Philosophy of Psychology

Unit of Study Code: PSYC3202

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Format of Unit: 2 x 1 hour lectures/week x 13 weeks
1 x 1 hour tutorial/week x 12 weeks
Tutorial sizes: maximum of 20 students per group

Credit Point Value: 4 Credit Points

Qualifying: 12 credit points of Intermediate Psychology

Assessment:
Classwork:
A 2,000 word essay, worth 40% of unit total
Due Date: Monday, 2 May (week 8)

Examination:
A 2 hr essay type examination, worth 60% of unit total

Evaluation of teaching and learning:
Date: Week 13 of semester
Type: questionnaire
Unit of study general description:

**Historical Foundations**

1. Scientific revolution and Descartes
2. British empiricism: Locke, Berkeley, Hume
3. Faculty Psychology
4. Neuroscience: Descartes to Helmholtz
5. Wundt and the founding of German Psychology
6. Continental psychology after Wundt, including Binet and Gestalt psychology
7. Evolutionary theory
8. Psychology of adaptation, including James
9. Functionalism
10. Behaviourism
11. Applied psychology
12. The cognitive revolution

**Philosophical Considerations**

A. Psychology as science

1. The nature of the relationship between Philosophy and Psychology; the nature of theory; conceptual vs empirical tests of hypotheses; other distinctions.
2. The positivist philosophical assumptions behind some of Psychology’s conceptual and methodological practices; operationism and inductivism in Psychology.
3. The debate in Psychology over the ontological status of hypothetical constructs and intervening variables.
4. Instrumentalist, falsificationist and realist approaches to Psychology’s theories.
5. Theory change, scientific progress, revolutions and the role of ‘paradigms’ in Psychology.
6. Confirmation holism, the Quine-Duhem and underdetermination theses; their relevance to Psychology.
7. Current alternatives to realism and the concept of objectivity: hermeneutics, social constructionism and postmodernism in Psychology.

B. Some fundamental concepts of Psychology

1. The concept of behaviour: bodily movements, actions and behaviour as a process
2. The concept of cognition: the representational concept of cognition and alternatives; the observation of cognitive processes
3. The concept of motivation: intentions, desires, goal directedness, needs and drives
Teaching outcomes:

(1) Awareness of the historical background and development of Psychology as a discipline.

(2) Ability to describe and evaluate significant themes in the history of Psychology.

(3) Awareness of explicit and implicit philosophical assumptions, (e.g., epistemological, ontological), embedded in psychological theories.

(4) Ability to identify and evaluate such philosophical assumptions.

(5) Ability to select particular topics in the history and philosophy of Psychology, identify the relevant concepts and formulate historically and logically argued theses about them.

(6) Acquisition of basic library skills to pursue research in the history and philosophy of psychology.

(7) Recognition that all psychological enquiry takes place in an historical and philosophical matrix.

Evidence of learning:

Assessment will take the form of an essay on a topic to be chosen from a given list, as well as a written examination which will cover the full syllabus. The examination will be in the form of essay and/or short-answer questions.

TIMETABLE

Lecturers: Dr H. Pols, weeks 1-2; Dr. S Boag, weeks 3, 12-13; Prof. R. Boakes, weeks 4-6; Dr F. Hibberd, weeks 7-11.

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<tr>
<th>WEEK</th>
<th>LECTURES</th>
<th>TUTORIALS</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1. (i) The philosophical background of modern Psychology: (i) British Empiricism; empiricism Vs rationalism. 2. (i) Representationism; the primary/secondary quality distinction and its viability.</td>
<td>No meeting.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3. (i) Problems of representationism; the realist alternative. 4. (i) Associationism. (ii) The Kantian framework.</td>
<td>Introductory meeting: semester arrangements.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>7. 19th century evolutionary theory. 8. Mental evolution and comparative Psychology.</td>
<td>Hume on phenomenalism, associationism and causality.</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>17. Instrumentalist and falsificationist approaches in Psychology. 18. Should Psychology disregard the Quine-Duhem and underdetermination theses?</td>
<td>Schlick on the logical positivist view of meaning and verification.</td>
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| 10   | 19. Is Psychology still waiting for its first scientific paradigm?  
20. Are Psychology’s observations and observation statements theory-laden, theory-dependent, or theory-neutral? | Popper on the criterion for the scientific status of a theory. |
| 12   | 23. The concept of cognition.  
24. The concept of motivation. | Social constructionism as a metatheory of Psychology. |
| 13   | 25. The concept of behaviour.  
26. The observability of mental processes | Fodor on imagery and the language of thought. |

**TEXT**