

Philosophy of Psychology

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How do we understand the psyche? Human emotions and desires? Our beliefs, rituals, and political ideologies? Sexism, racism, and war? Love, literature, poetry, and art? This course explores the human mind and brings philosophy to bear on what we know about ourselves, our existential needs, our biological instincts and potentials, the evolution of our cognitive structures, why we think, desire, feel, love, fear, hate, and, despair. We study the premises and principles of different psychological schools and theories, and then bring philosophical scrutiny to questions of knowledge, morality, politics, metaphysics, and esthetics.



...cultural institutions roughly manifest *degrees of hallucinosis* in their epistemological grounds.

- Weston La Barre

Human beings seem to have an almost unlimited capacity to deceive themselves.

- R.D. Laing

Normalcy *is* neurosis.

- Ernest Becker

...when one comes face to face with death and the existence of self—one's 'self-existence'—stands out clearly in relief against the backdrop of nihility. Questions crowd in upon one: Why have I been alive? Where did I come from and where am I going? A void appears here that nothing in the world can fill; a gaping abyss opens up at the very ground on which one stands. In the face of this abyss, not one of all the things that had made up the stuff of life until then is of any use.

- Keiji Nishitani

...one of the most significant of human characteristics is that we are more clearly defined by what we do not know about ourselves than by what we do understand.

- Carl Goldberg

He called me a fool, so I knifed him.

- Max Bernstein

Know thyself.

- Socrates

...it is surely evident that so much of twentieth century psychology developed within the death throes of a dying episteme.

- Barnaby Barratt

Required Texts:

All posted on Canvas

Kevin Aho: *Contexts of Suffering: A Heideggerian Approach to Psychopathology*

Scott Atran: *In Gods We Trust: The Evolutionary Landscape of Religion*

Barnaby Barratt: *Psychic Reality and Psychoanalytic Knowing*

Ernest Becker: *The Denial of Death*

José Luis Bermudez (Ed.): *Philosophy of Psychology*

Sigmund Freud: *Civilization and its Discontents*

Christopher Ryan & Cacilda Jethá: *Sex at Dawn*

Ruth Stein: *For Love of the Father*

Caleb Carr: *The Alienist* (television series or novel)

Assignments and Grading:

In *addition* to the required reading, the students will be assigned:

1) Midterm Essay

6-8 pages

(40 % of total grade)

2) Final Essay

of 8-10 pages

(40% of total grade)

3) Participation

You are expected to participate regularly and assiduously in online forum discussions

(20% of total grade)

* **Grading** will be determined by the effort of the student, her/his evidence of having carefully read and contemplated the material, and her/his expression of independent thought on the ideas. Late assignments will suffer penalties as follows: the subtraction of one grade increment per day the assignment is late.

* **Attendance** is mandatory. After the 3rd absence one letter grade will be subtracted from your final course grade. **Lateness** will not be tolerated. It is rude and disruptive, and may be considered a complete absence. Visible lack of preparation for a session will also be counted as a missed class and will result in a proportional deduction of points from the final grade.

* **Readings** consist of the required texts and uploaded assignments. There will also be a number of *optional* handouts supplied to help students understand the primary readings and provide perspective. Suggested readings appear below the required & optional handout readings and are for your interest and edification only.

IMPORTANT:

Class Credo and Ethic: Like all classes, philosophy is about the free exchange of ideas as well as relentless questioning of beliefs and concepts. You are entitled to your beliefs but in a philosophy class *no idea is spared* from questioning or examination. If you do not want your beliefs or faith questioned, you are *strongly* advised to enroll in other classes more suitable to your beliefs and temperament.

Participation and Conduct:

Cell phones, computers, MP3 players, video games, and other non-class-related accouterments will absolutely be turned off during class.

There will be no web surfing, instant messaging, texting, tweeting, game playing, or any similar activities during class. These activities are disrespectful and disrupt the instructor and your fellow classmates. Students ignoring this rule will be considered absent, and it will impact your class participation grade.

Students are expected to engage in lively discussion and spirited exchange. They need not agree with one another and they are encouraged to question ideas, but they must also be respectful towards other students and the instructor. You can argue forcefully for or against an idea, but are required to comport yourselves with civility.

Masks and Distancing:

You are expected to wear effective masks and engage in social distancing while in my classroom.

The university requires that you wear masks in all university buildings. *This is university policy and is non-negotiable.* If you do not wish to wear a mask for the entirety of your time inside, do not enter. If you refuse to wear a mask or wear it ineffectively (below your nose, etc.) you will summarily be asked to leave the classroom. Or I will simply call campus security and have you escorted out of the building and removed from the class roster. You may believe that you have the constitutional freedom or god-given right not to mask, but this doesn't give you the moral right to violate university policy or place others at risk.

Note well: The only acceptable masks allowed in my classroom will be medical, multi-layer, N95, KN95, and other similar masks demonstrated by the available science to be effective in stopping the spread of virus particles. Masks with valves do NOT protect others and are not acceptable. Bandanas, scarves, shirts, balaclavas, ninja masks, and other coverings proved scientifically ineffective will NOT be allowed. If you find this oppressive, offensive, conspiratorial, and so on, your freedom gives you the right to take classes elsewhere, but NOT to impose your beliefs on others or endanger them. **This is non-negotiable.**

Communications:

You may email me with concerns and questions, but do not expect me to recapitulate class lectures or discussions. Feel free to email to make an office hours appointment (via Zoom, phone, or on campus meeting) if you wish to discuss the ideas or other issues.

Academic Honesty:

Violations of Rutgers policies on academic honesty will not be tolerated in this course. Plagiarism and cheating will be grounds for failure, if not expulsion from the university.

COURSE TOPICS

Branches of Psychology

Psychological Methods of Gathering & Interpreting Data

Epistemological Issues in Understanding the Mind

Human “Nature” & Motivation

Nature vs Nurture

The Nature of Cognition & Perception

Consciousness & Unconsciousness

Human Ontology: Desire, Belief, Need, Fear, Hatred, Prejudice

Normality & Abnormality

Mental “Illness” / Psychopathology

Childhood

Religion

Sexuality

Violence

Therapy

COURSE OUTLINE:

I. INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY OF PSYCHOLOGY

Overview and Course Goals

Schools, Branches, Models, and Methods of Psychology

Banishing Preconceptions, Misconceptions and Clichés About Psychology

Readings:

- Ryan & Jethá: *Sex at Dawn*, Introduction
- Block: What is Philosophy of Psychology?
- Davidson: Psychology as Philosophy (Bermudez, chapter 2)
- Carr: *The Alienist*

II. EPISTEMOLOGY

What is the Most Effective, Scientific, Comprehensive Way to Understand the Mind?

How Do We Understand Our Own Minds?

How Do We Understand Other Minds?

Self-Knowledge & Self-Deception

Theories and Speculations on Human Motivation from Aristotle to Zizek

Techniques and Limitations of Each Psychological Model

Meaning, Interpretation, Hermeneutics, Symbolism

Readings:

- Jung: Approaching the Unconscious
- Barratt: *Psychic Reality and Psychoanalytic Knowing*
- Verhaeghe: The Impotence of Epistemology (*optional*)
- Yalom: *Existential Psychotherapy*
- Zizek: *The Sublime Object of Ideology*
- Mullahy: *Oedipus: Myth and Complex*

Supplementary Readings:

- Ricoeur: Epistemology: Between Psychology and Phenomenology
- Verhaeghe: "Chronicle of a Death Foretold": The End of Psychotherapy

Suggested Readings:

Thompson: Psychical and External Reality

Grunbaum: *The Foundations of Psychoanalysis*

Grunbaum: *Validation in the Clinical Theory of Psychoanalysis*

Beit-Hallahmi: *Psychoanalysis and Theism*

Ricoeur: *Freud and Philosophy*

Barrett: A Fresh Start Philosophically, in *Ego and Instinct*

Eagle: *Recent Developments in Psychoanalysis*

Shapiro: *Psychoanalysis and Contemporary Science*

Gilligan: *In a Different Voice*

Misiak: *The Philosophical Roots of Scientific Psychology*

Slavin & Kriegman: *The Adaptive Design of the Human Psyche*

Horowitz: *Psychodynamics and Cognition*

Fisher & Greenberg: *Freud Scientifically Reappraised*

Fisher & Greenberg: *The Scientific Evaluation of Freud's Theories and Therapy*
 Fisher & Greenberg: *The Scientific Credibility of Freud's Theories and Therapy*
 Eysenck & Wilson: *The Experimental Study of Freudian Theories*
 Kline: *Fact and Fantasy in Freudian Theory*
 Kline: *Psychology and Freudian Theory*
 Kline: *Psychology Exposed*
 Mujeeb-ur-Rahman: *The Freudian Paradigm*
 Hook: *Psychoanalysis, Scientific Method and Philosophy*
 Thompson: *The Truth About Freud's Technique*
 Laudan: *Progress and its Problems*
 Barratt: *Psychoanalysis and the Postmodern Impulse*
 Barratt: *What is Psychoanalysis?*
 Freedman, et al.: *Another Kind of Evidence: Studies on Internalization, Annihilation
Anxiety, and Progressive Symbolization in the Psychoanalytic Process*

III. PHILOSOPHY OF MIND

Thought & Emotion Processing
 Cognition, Computation, Representation, Modulation
 AI, Programming, and Encoding
 Are Brains Computers?
 Sanity & Insanity
 Normality, Abnormality, Diagnosis, & "Illness"

Readings:

- Egan: How to Think about Mental Content
- Churchland & Sejnowski: Neural Representation and Neural Computation (Bermudez, chapter 9)
- Fodor: The Persistence of the Attitudes (Bermudez, chapter 11)
- Stich: Autonomous Psychology and the Belief-Desire Thesis (Bermudez, chapter 12)
- Fodor: *Precis of The Modularity of Mind* (Bermudez, chapter 23)
- Stich: Beliefs and Subdoxastic States (Bermudez, chapter 26)
- Hempel: The Logical Analysis of Psychology
- Putnam: Brains and Behavior
- Davidson: Mental Events
- Block & Fodor: What Psychological States are Not

Secondary Readings:

- McLeod, Plunkett, & Rolls: The Attraction of Distributed Processing for Modelling Cognition" (Bermudez, chapter 10)
- Skinner: Selections from Science and Human Behavior
- Stich: Grammar, Psychology, and Indeterminacy
- Barratt: The Advances of Neuroscience
- McGraw: *Brain & Belief* (chapters 11-13)
- Freud: Psychoanalytic Notes on An Autobiographical Case of Paranoia
- Sass: *The Paradoxes of Delusion*
- Schore: *Affect Dysregulation & Disorders of the Self*

- Langs: *The Evolution of the Emotion-Processing Mind*
- Fanon: *Black Skin, White Masks* (chapter 6)
- Fromm: *The Sane Society*

Suggested Readings:

Bowlby: *Attachment*
 Berger: *The Sacred Canopy*
 Winquist: *Desiring Theology*
 Shiffer: *Of Two Minds*
 Schumaker: *The Corruption of Reality*
 Binswanger: Insanity as Life-Historical Phenomenon, in *Existence*
 Gruen: *The Insanity of Normality*
 Shengold: *Delusions of Everyday Life*
 Segal: *Phantasy in Everyday Life*
 Abadi & Rogers: *Reality and/or Realities*
 Szasz: *The Myth of Mental Illness*
 Piven: *Death and Delusion*
 Flanagan: *The Science of the Mind*
 Ginot: *The Neuropsychology of the Unconscious*

IV. PHYSICS AND METAPHYSICS

Ontology & Human "Nature"

Mind & Matter

Mind & Body

Desire, Motivation, Conflict

Sexuality, Identity, Paraphilia

Belief, Ideology, Religion, Ritual, Worship

Group Psychology & Groupthink

Violence, Vengeance, Death, Immortality

Readings:

- Freud: *Civilization and its Discontents*
- Piven: *Death, Neurosis, and Normalcy*
- Ryan & Jethá: *Sex at Dawn*
- Barratt: *Sensual Embodiment and the Erotics of Experience*
- Aho: *Contexts of Suffering: A Heideggerian Approach to Psychopathology*
- Atran: *The Evolutionary Landscape of Religion*
- Becker: *The Denial of Death* (chapters 1-5)

Supplementary Readings:

- Dawkins: *The God Delusion*
- Kristeva: *This Incredible Need to Believe*
- Perrotta: *Paraphilic Disorder*
- Berner & Briken: *Pleasure Seeking and the Aspect of Longing for an Object in Perversion. A Neuropsychanalytical Perspective*
- Giffney & Watson: *Clinical Encounters in Sexuality*
- Piven: *Eroticisms*, introduction: *In Defense of Perversion*

Suggested Readings:

Hume: *Dialogues on Natural Religion*
 Beauvoir: *The Second Sex*
 La Barre: *The Human Animal*
 Spitz: *The First Year of Life*
 Harlow: From Thought to Therapy: Lessons from a Primate Laboratory
 Brody & Axelrad: *Anxiety and Ego Formation in Infancy*
 Freud: *Three Essays on a Theory of Sexuality*
 Brown: The Excremental Vision, in *Life Against Death*
 McDougall: *The Many Faces of Eros*
 Stoller: *Perversion*
 Stoller: *Observing the Erotic Imagination*
 Kaplan: *Female Perversions*
 Horney: *Feminine Psychology*
 Lederer: *The Fear of Women*
 Chodorow: *Femininities, Masculinities, Sexualities*
 Ross: *Perversion: A Jungian Approach*
 May: *The Cry for Myth*
 Frankl: *Man's Search for Meaning*
 Davis: *Inwardness and Existence*
 Nishitani: *Religion and Nothingness*
 Lifton: *The Broken Connection*
 Schopenhauer: *The World as Will and Representation* (esp. On Man's Need for Metaphysics)
 Jong: Born Idolaters: The Limits of the Philosophical Implications of the
 Cognitive Science of Religion
 Hobbes: *Leviathan*
 Arendt: *The Human Condition*
 Arendt: *The Life of the Mind*
 Kaufmann: *Existentialism, Religion, and Death*
 Gaylin: *Hatred*
 Milgram: *Obedience to Authority*
 Bourke: *An Intimate History of Killing*
 Akhtar: *The Seed of Madness*
 Warren: *Ontological Terror*
 La Barre: *The Ghost Dance: Origins of Religion*
 Langs: *Death Anxiety in Clinical Practice*
 Piven: *Death and Delusion*
 Piven: *The Psychology of Death in Fantasy and History*

V. POLITICS

Zoon Politikon

Wars & Crusades

The Need to Have Enemies & Allies

The Political Brain

Readings:

- Becker: *The Denial of Death* (chapter 7)
- Solomon, et al.: *The Worm at the Core*
- Cohen, et al.: The Trump Card

- Westen: *The Political Brain*
- Laing: *The Politics of Experience*
- Holland: *The Capitalist Uncanny*
- Lipman-Blumen: *The Allure of Toxic Leaders*

Suggested Readings:

Freud: *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*
 Bion: *Experiences in Groups*
 Anzieu: *The Group and the Unconscious*
 Goleman: *The Collective Self*, in *Vital Lies, Simple Truths*
 Bamyeh: *Of Death and Dominion: The Existential Foundations of Governance*
 Eigen: *Age of Psychopathy*
 Solomon, et al.: *In the Wake of 9/11*
 Pyszczynski, et al.: *Thirty Years of Terror Management Theory*
 Routledge & Vess: *Handbook of Terror Management Theory* (available as pdf on request)
 Davis: *Death's Dream Kingdom*
 Wyschogrod: *Spirit in Ashes*
 Atran: *Talking to the Enemy*
 Robins and Post: *Political Paranoia*
 Post: *Leaders and Their Followers in a Dangerous World*
 Volkan: *The Need to Have Enemies and Allies*
 Kressel: *Mass Hate*
 Staub: *The Roots of Evil*
 Stern: *Terror in the Name of God*
 Juergensmeyer: *Terror in the Mind of God*
 Arendt: *The Origins of Totalitarianism*
 Hedges: *War is a Force That Gives Us Meaning*

VI. ETHICS

Why are We Moral and Immoral?
 Conscience, Guilt, Shame, and Remorse
 Violence and Evil
 Love and Evil

Readings:

- Stein: *For Love of the Father*
- Prinz: *The Emotional Construction of Morals*

Suggested Readings:

Sagan: *Freud, Women, and Morality*
 Wallwork: *Psychoanalysis and Ethics*
 Arendt: *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*
 Minnich: *The Evil of Banality*
 Diamond: *Anger, Madness, and the Daimonic*
 Goldberg: *Speaking with the Devil*
 Goldberg: *The Evil We Do*
 Grand: *The Reproduction of Evil*
 Noddings: *Women and Evil*

Bernstein: *The Abuse of Evil*
 Sheets-Johnstone: *The Roots of Morality*

VII. CONCLUSIONS

What Have We Learned from Psychology?

How Can Philosophy Refine the Findings of Psychology?

How Can Psychology Solve Problems, Deepen Thought, or Help People?

Suggested Readings:

Hillman: *We've Had A Hundred Years of Psychotherapy and the World's Getting Worse*

Hillman: *The Dream and the Underworld*

Barratt: *Radical Psychoanalysis*

Loy: *Lack and Transcendence*

Kohut: *The Restoration of the Self*

Eigen: *The Psychotic Core*

Yalom: *Existential Psychotherapy*

Verhaeghe: *On Being Normal and Other Disorders*

Barratt: *The Emergence of Somatic Psychology and Bodymind Therapy*

Thompson: *The Death of Desire: An Existential Study in Sanity & Madness*