

PSYCH 394.04/695.04: GROUP STUDIES: HUMAN INSTINCT
CALL#. 40187-1
Winter 2007

Instructor: Delwin Lindsey, Ph.D.

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Time: M W, 3:15 – 5:00 PM

Class Location: O-263

Course Website: <http://www.mansfield.ohio-state.edu/psych/dlindsey/>

Office Hours: M W, 11 AM - Noon and by appointment

Required Texts:

How the Mind Works. (HTMW) Steven Pinker ISBN: 0060984031

The Agile Gene. (TAG) Matt Ridley. ISBN: 0-06-000679-X

Both required texts are inexpensive paperbacks and will be available for purchase at Follett's Bookstore located on the OSU-M/NCTC campus. Additional readings will be available in PDF or HTML formats for download at the course website, or will be made available in hard copy by the instructor.

Course Overview:

Mind, n. A mysterious form of matter secreted by the brain. Its chief activity consists in the endeavor to ascertain its own nature, the futility of the attempt being due to the fact that it has nothing but itself to know itself with. (**Ambrose Bierce, *The Devil's Dictionary***)

In spite of (or perhaps, in view of) Bierce's caveat, we are going to take a thorough look at the nature and the nurture of the human mind. This perspective is best summarized by Steven Pinker in the introduction to *How the Mind Works*: "The human mind is a system of organs of computation designed by natural selection to solve problems faced by our evolutionary ancestors in their foraging way of life." Thus, we come into this world with a set of genetically-specified mental modules—our human instincts.

This course will examine evolutionary psychological as well as molecular biological principles and how they can be applied to understand a number of puzzling and often counter-intuitive aspects of human behavior, perception and cognition: Human sexuality, cooperation and altruistic behavior, human emotional responses, thinking and reasoning, beauty and esthetics, morality, aggression and homicide, and childhood socialization.

While the course will focus on aspects of the human mind that likely have been shaped by millions of years of evolution and thus are specified by the human genome, we will also look at a number of epigenetic phenomena: aspects of the human mind that clearly emerge as a consequence of both genetic and environmental factors. The key idea here is that the genes not only write the script, they are major actors in the drama. We will see that the nature/nurture dichotomy is a false one and we will strive to formulate a more accurate way of characterizing human instinct.

The course will be taught as a graduate-style seminar. The Instructor will lead discussion during the first two weeks of class; after that, all discussion will be student-led and highly interactive. Classic sources by Steven Pinker and Matt Ridley form the backbone of the readings for the course. However, there will be a number of additional readings, many of which are primary source articles.

Instructor Expectations:

1. Students will read ca. 50-100 pages of material a week.
2. Students will complete the assigned readings before class and be prepared for critical discussion of these readings. They will prepare two questions for group discussion based on the readings.
3. Students will participate in all class discussions.
4. Students will be expected to select two general topics from the course schedule and, as members of a team, present the readings and lead discussion on those topics.
5. Students will be expected to write an original literature review of a specific sub-area of their own choosing in evolutionary psychology, as broadly defined. The paper is expected to be 15-20 pages.
6. Students will prepare and deliver a 20-minute in-class presentation that summarizes the findings from their literature review.

Evaluation:

Grades will be based on total points (out of 400) from completion of the following 4 assignments:

Questions for class discussion – 100 points possible

1. 2 questions per class, based on readings, that could form basis for class discussion.
2. Questions should be “big-picture” in scope. They should relate to the fundamental assumptions, methodologies (where appropriate) and conclusions of the authors.
3. Questions are due in writing at the beginning of each class.

Leading Class Discussion – 100 points possible

1. Students will select one or two topics for group discussion, based on weekly class schedule (below). Exact structure of this component will depend on number of students in the class.

2. Students will be members of a team (depending on class size) that will give an overview of the readings for that day, as well as lead group discussion of those readings.
3. Grades will be assigned in terms of team preparedness and understanding of the readings, organization of their overview presentation, and their ability to foster group discussion with big-picture questions/topics for discussion.

Literature Review Paper – 100 points possible

1. During the course, students will select a topic for their research paper. This topic will be selected from either the general topic outline, or the individual readings.
2. You will write a brief (1 page) proposal and submit it to the instructor no later than the 7th week of the course. In this proposal you will state the topic of your literature review, and a general outline of the structure of your paper. The instructor will review the proposals and make comments where appropriate. Note: the sooner you submit your proposal, the sooner you can begin your research project.
3. The literature review will be 15-20 pages, and will include a bibliography of no fewer than 10 primary sources. Papers are due the last day of class.

Literature Review Presentation – 100 points possible

A 15 minute presentation to the class sometime during the last two weeks of the quarter. This will constitute the “Final Exam.” You should plan on 12 minutes of actual content, and allow 3 minutes (approximately) for questions/comments. Students will be graded on the basis of organization, content, and delivery of their presentation, as well as on how well they handled questions from the audience.

Some general guidelines for creating your presentation:

1. PowerPoint slides are a great way to deliver your presentation.
2. Organizing your presentation is easy if you follow these three simple principles:
 - a. Tell them what you’re going to tell them.
 - b. Tell them.
 - c. Tell them what you told them.
3. Your choice of presentation content should be guided by the following principles:
 - a. Why did you choose your research topic?
 - b. What was the central thesis (or goal) that guided your literature review? What did you hope to learn from your literature review? How does your topic relate to other topics/material discussed in the course?
 - c. What did you learn as a result of your literature review. What conclusions did you come to regarding your central thesis/goals?

4. Practice your presentation before you deliver it in class! Have someone time you, and critique your presentation. You will be surprised how quickly 15 minutes passes.
5. Practice some more.

Grading:

A	94% - 100%
A-	90% - 93%
B+	87% - 89%
B	84% - 86%
B-	80% - 83%
C+	77% - 79%
C	74% - 76%
C-	70% - 73%
D+	67% - 69%
D	60% - 66%
E	Below 60%

Make-up Work:

Work (questions/comments, leading discussion, research project paper and presentation) can be made up only if the student has a medical or family emergency. Written evidence of the emergency must be provided either before the work is due or as soon as possible after the work is due. The instructor reserves the right to decide on the adequacy of excuses. *See me at once* if you miss any of the work or when you anticipate missing it. You must see me, in person, in my office for this.

Weekly Class Schedule:

Week 1. Review syllabus. Course Introduction.

Week 2. The Yin-Yang of Nature and Nurture. Instructor will lead discussion.

READINGS:

Mon. Ridley, M. *TAG*, p. 1-68. Twelve hairy men, The paragon of animals,
The plethora of instincts.

Wed: Pinker, S. *HTMW*, p. 1-58. Standard Equipment.

Week 3. Origins of Nature/Nuture Debate, An EP Manifesto and EP Principles.

READINGS:

Mon: Ridley, M. *TAG*, p. 69-97. A convenient jingle.

Cosmedes, L., and Tooby J. Evolutionary Psychology: A primer.
<http://www.psych.ucsb.edu/research/cep/primer.html>

Wed: Movie: NOVA. Dogs and More Dogs.

Pinker, S. *HTMW*, p. 149-210. Revenge of the Nurds.

Week 4. Development

READINGS:

Mon: Ridley, M. *TAG*, p. 125-176. Genes in the 4th dimension, Formative years.

Wed: Spelke, E.S. (2000). Core knowledge. *American Psychologist*, **55**, 1233-1243.

Wang, R. F & Spelke, E. S. (2002). Human spatial representation: Insights from animals. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* **6**,376-382.

Lipton, J.S. & Spelke, E.S. (2003). Origins of number sense: Large number discrimination in human infants. *Psychological Science*, **14**, 396-401.

Week 5. Mind and Brain. How do humans think?

READINGS:

Mon: Continue discussion from previous week

Wed: Pinker, S. *HTMW* p. 299 --362. Good ideas

Week 6. Culture Knowledge and Thought. Linguistic Determinism, Linguistic Relativity and Universal categories.

READINGS:

Mon: Ridley, M. *TAG*, p. 201-230. Conundrums of culture.

Wed: Hardin, C.L. (1998) Basic color terms and basic color categories.
In: Backhaus, Kliegel, and Werner, *Color vision: Perspective from Different Disciplines*.

Brown, R.W & Lenneberg, E.H. (1954). A study in language and cognition. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*. 49, p. 454-462.

Lindsey, D. T. & Brown, A.M (2002). Color naming and the phototoxic effects of sunlight on the eye. *Psychological Science*. **13**,506-512.

Week 7. Family Values and Socialization

READINGS:

Mon: Pinker, S. *HTMW* p. 425-460, Family Values.

Wed: Harris, J.R. (1995). Where is the child's environment? A group socialization theory of development. *Psychological Review*. **102**, p. 458-489.

Week 8. Free will, love, aggression, homicide, mental disorders.

READINGS:

Mon: Pinker, S. *HTMW* p. 363—424, Hotheads.

Wed: Dentley, J & Buss, D.M. (2004) The evolution of evil. From *The Social Psychology of Good and Evil*. p. 102-123.

Buss, D. (2000). The evolution of happiness. *American Psychologist*, 55, p 15-23.

Week 9. Free will, cont'd

READINGS:

Mon: Ridley, M. *TAG*, p. 98-123. The madness of causes.

See also Ridley p. 267-275.

Wed: Kramer, D. A. Gene-environment interplay in the context of genetics, epigenetics and gene expression. *J. Am. Acad. Child Adolesc. Psychiatry*, 2005; 44,p.19-27.

Week 10. Student presentations

Week 11. Student presentations.

Academic Misconduct

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term “academic misconduct” includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487).

For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct (http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/info_for_students/csc.asp).

Disability Services

Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated, and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office for Disability Services is located in the Conard Learning Center, 1860 University Drive, Mansfield Ohio 44906; telephone 419.755.4304, FAX 419.755.4016, TTY 419.755.4017; <http://mansfield.osu.edu/Conard/disability/disability.htm>. Michelle McLane is the director of the Office for Disability Services at OSU-M.