

PHIL 3260: Philosophy of Psychology
York University

Course description

From the course catalog: "An examination of whether psychological research can help to answer traditional philosophical questions. Case studies may include: psychiatric and mental disorders, rational thought, animal cognition, the placebo effect, the nature of concepts, attribution theory, moral psychology, or consciousness."

The trajectory of the course is as follows: [1] we will begin with an examination of the historical background of the field and early psychological theories; [2] we will then move to consider various contemporary theories including folk psychology, computational functionalism, connectionism, embodied cognition, and evolutionary models in psychology; and [3] we will conclude by evaluating various contemporary debates about learning, memory, consciousness, emotion, and personal identity. Throughout the semester, we will return to the central question of the course: can, and how, does psychological research aid us in responding to traditional philosophical problems?

The primary objectives of this course are that [1] students leave with a general competency in the philosophy of psychology, as well as the ability to engage with contemporary debates in the field; [2] students appreciate interdisciplinary work and are able to understand, synthesize, and respond to texts; [3] students are better able to engage with ongoing debates in both philosophy and psychology, demonstrating the ability to read carefully and represent charitably positions with which they agree or disagree; and [4] students develop an awareness of and appreciation for the relationship between theory and application.