## Philosophy of Psychology Syllabus

**Instructor:** Mona Fazeli
**Course format:** Online (Zoom)
**Course site:** BruinLearn (all readings, links, and announcements)

# 1. Course summary

We are creatures that perceive the world around us, have feelings about it, and reason and solve problems within it. One way of putting this is to say that we have minds. But what sort of thing is a mind that can do all that? This course approaches that question through philosophy of psychology. It examines how psychology, as the scientific study of the mind, explains mental life and what philosophical questions those explanations raise.

To give the course a clear focus, we will look primarily at mental representations, which are, roughly, bits of information the mind carries about the world. First, we will ask what mental representations are, and how they differ from other aspects of mental life, such as sensation and consciousness. Second, we will look at different kinds of mental representations and ask how they are formed, how they are processed, what structure they have, and how they are used in problem-solving and reasoning. Third, we will study how the systems that produce these representations are related: do they work independently, or do they interact with one another? Finally, we will ask what psychological theories of reasoning can tell us about when our reasoning goes well and when it goes wrong.

# 2. Course goals

This course offers an overview of how philosophers think about the mind. The lectures and assignments are designed to promote philosophical discussion and build writing skills. We will repeatedly pause to formulate questions about the material, treating philosophy as a practice of inquiry rather than a mere collection of conclusions.

We will also work on developing philosophical prose through writing exercises and paper assignments, with an emphasis on clarity, precision, and concision. Before each paper, guidelines will be distributed that focus on specific aspects of philosophical writing. The guidelines will build in complexity as the term progresses.

# 3. Course Materials

All required readings and any supplementary materials will be posted on BruinLearn.

# 4. Meeting times and office hours

**Lecture (Zoom):** TBD

**Instructor office hours (Zoom):** TBD

**Discussion sections (Zoom):** TBD

**TA information and office hours:** TBD

**Contacting the Instructor:** Email is the fastest way to reach me: monafazeli@ucla.edu. I aim to respond within *48 hours on weekdays*. If you don't hear back, please resend—messages occasionally get lost.

# 5. Grading scale and grade breakdown

## Letter grade scale

- A+ = 97–100%
- A = 93–96%
- A− = 90–92%
- B+ = 86–89%
- B = 83–85%
- B− = 80–82%
- C+ = 77–79%
- C = 73–76%
- C− = 70–72%
- D+ = 67–69%
- D = 63–66%
- D− = 60–62%
- F = 0–59%

## Components

- **Section attendance — 10%** Credit for active listening and being fully present. This includes having your camera on unless you have circumstances that require another arrangement (please coordinate with your TA).
- **Section participation — 5%** Quality participation: asking questions, offering comments, responding to peers, and engaging the reading.
- **Live quizzes and short writing exercises — 20%** These quizzes take about 10–15 minutes of lecture time. You must submit by the end of the activity on BruinLearn. *No make-ups.*
- **Midterm paper — 30%** (600–800 words)
- **Final paper — 35%** (700–1000 words)

These components are meant to support steady practice and give you feedback throughout the term. If something isn't working for you, reach out early.

# 6. Important notes and policies

## Syllabus updates

This document is a plan for the term, but small changes may be necessary (e.g., pacing, dates, or readings). Any updates will be announced clearly in advance.

## Late Penalty and Extensions

- **Late penalty:** Papers submitted late will drop by **one third of a letter grade per day** (e.g., A− → B+; B+ → B).
- **Extensions:** If you have a legitimate reason, you may request an extension, and you should request it *at least 48 hours before* the due date. Emergencies are an exception.

## Academic Integrity

Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are serious and will be handled under university policy, which you are expected to be familiar with. If you are unsure what needs to be cited—or whether something counts as plagiarism—ask *before* submitting. Cases of suspected dishonesty will be reported to the *Dean of Students*.

## Accommodations

If you need academic accommodations, please contact the Center for Accessible Education (CAE) as early as possible—ideally within the first two weeks—so there is enough time to coordinate support. CAE: (310) 825-1501; Murphy Hall A255.

# 7. Student Support and Resources

- **Philosophy Writing Center Programs:** Support tailored for philosophy students (see BruinLearn for the link).
- **Undergraduate Writing Center:** Drop-ins and appointments (see BruinLearn for the link).
- **Writing tips for philosophy:** Professor Jim Pryor's guidelines (see BruinLearn for the link).

Additional campus resources:

- Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS): (310) 825-0768
- CARE Advocacy Office: (310) 206-2465; 24-hour crisis counseling: (888) 200-6665
- UCLA Writing Programs: see BruinLearn for the link

# 8. Tentative schedule

**All readings will be accessible on BruinLearn.** Each week has two required anchor readings (one per lecture). Optional readings are recommended for students who want additional background or are writing papers on that week's topic.

UNIT ONE: Introduction and Mental Representation

- Week One
    - ♦ Lecture One: What Is Philosophy of Psychology?
        - José Luis Bermúdez: "What is the Philosophy of Psychology?" Philosophy of Psychology: A Contemporary Introduction (2005)
    - ♦ Lecture Two: Introduction and Overview
        - Jerry A. Fodor: "Preface," The Language of Thought (1975)
        - Jerry A. Fodor: short excerpt from The Language of Thought (1975)
- Week Two
    - ♦ Lecture One: What Representations Are
        - Shimon Edelman: Computing the Mind (2007) (pp. 13-25)
        - Nicholas Shea: Introduction, Representation in Cognitive Science (2018)
    - ♦ Lecture Two: Distinguishing Representation from Sensation and Consciousness
        - Tyler Burge: "Perception: Where Mind Begins" (2007)
        - Kathleen Akins: "Of Sensory Systems and the 'Aboutness' of Mental States" (1996) (optional; skip Section Three)

UNIT TWO: Conceptual Representations

- Week Three
    - ♦ Lecture One: Conceptual Representation and the Language of Thought
        - Jerry A. Fodor: excerpts from The Language of Thought (1975)
    - ♦ Lecture Two: Conceptual Representation and the Language of Thought, cont.
        - Susan Schneider: "The Language of Thought," The Routledge Companion to Philosophy of Psychology (2019)

**Midterm Paper Due: TBD**

- Week Four
    - ♦ Lecture One: Modularity and Mental Architecture
        - Jerry A. Fodor: Modularity of Mind (1983), (Selection to be announced)
    - ♦ Lecture Two: Mental Architecture
        - Peter. Carruthers: The Architecture of the Mind (2006), (Selection to be announced)

UNIT Five: Reasoning

- Week Five
    - ♦ Lecture One: What are Inferential Transitions?
        - Origins of Objectivity, T. Burge (2010), (Selection to be announced)
    - ♦ Lecture Two: Dual-Process Theory
        - Jonathan St. B. T. Evans and Keith E. Stanovich: "Dual-Process Theories of Higher Cognition: Advancing the Debate" (2013)
- Unit Six: Critics of Dual Process Theories
    - ♦ Lecture One: Critics of Dual Process Theories
        - Dual-Process Theories, J. Evans (2018)
    - ♦ Lecture Two: Critics of Dual-Process Theory, Cont.
        - Peter. Carruthers: An Architecture for Dual Reasoning (2009)

**Final Paper Due: TBD**