

Foundations of Psychological Thought

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Psy 210/Hum 210 S'26
Lectures Tu., Th. 10:40-11:30

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Foundations of Psychological Thought

An exploration of original texts in the history of ideas about the workings of the human mind leading to the founding of the empirical discipline of psychology in the 19th century and some of its 20th and 21st century trends. The course begins with the first systematic treatment of the life of the mind, found in Aristotle, then turns to the Stoics and Epicureans and their later descendants in early modern and modern philosophy: Descartes, Hobbes, Spinoza, Hume, Kant, Rousseau. The rise of empirical psychology will be examined through works of J.S. Mill, Herbart, Wundt, James, Nietzsche, and S. Freud. Subsequent developments, including the child study movement, will be explored through 20th century writings, culminating with Sartre's philosophical psychology and some Eastern sources to put the Western trajectory in perspective and suggest possible fresh directions.

We will extract the psychological insights in the writings, scrutinizing the arguments and evidence used in their defense and weighing their value in the light of what we know today. We will also remain attuned to strands of thought that have not been followed up in the discipline and perhaps ought to be.

Determination of final grade (Grading rubric and expectations for scholarship are on pp. 7-8):

Six take-home short-answer/short-essay assessments ~every 2 wks.	50%
Final project	30%
Participation/Attendance/in-class written responses/town hall contributions	20%

*All work must be submitted for a passing grade

*Also required: 4 hrs participation in Psych Dept studies online, or alternative; details TBA (see p. 9 here)

Reading available for purchase:

Course packet (Pequod), and the following books:

Epictetus, *Discourses, fragments, handbook*. R. Hard, trans.

Augustine, *Confessions*. G. Wills, trans.

Descartes, *Meditations on first philosophy* J. Cottingham, trans.

Hobbes, *Leviathan*, E. Curley, ed.

Spinoza, *Ethics*. E. Curley, trans.

Rousseau, *A discourse on inequality*, M. Cranston, trans.

Freud, *Civilization and its discontents*

Rahula, *What the Buddha taught*

Russell, *The history of western philosophy* (optional)

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Course Schedule

Week	Date	Reading (P = Packet, B = Book)
ANTIQUITY, EARLY A.D.		
1	1/27	Introduction; “psyche”
	1/29	<u>Aristotle (330 B.C.E.)</u> , <i>De anima</i> , I 1,4 excerpts; II 1-3 (the first avowed psychological treatise; soul as the form of our being, not separate) P <u>Aristotle</u> , <i>Nicomachean ethics</i> , VI 2; X 3-5 (on pleasure) P
2	2/3	<u>Epicureans (300-50 B.C.E.)</u> (Pleasure as greatest good, via limitation of desire) —Epicurus (300 B.C.): Letter to Menoecus P
	2/5	<u>Stoics (300 B.C.E.- 200 C.E.)</u> (Reason master of passion): Epictetus (110 C.E.), <i>Discourses</i> I 4[1-4], 6[23-25], 12[11-16], 15[1-8], 28[1-10], 29[5-7]; II 6[6-11], 7[9-14], 8[1-8], 11[19-25], 13[1-2],16[22-26]; IV 1[1,29-30,46-50,57,67-70, 72, 76-77, 88-90, 119-126, 174-176], 7[1-5, 19-20], 9[1-4], 11[1-2] B (I-IV = Bk; 1, 2... = Ch.; [1,2...] = segments) --1 st assessment--
3	2/1	<u>Augustine(397 CE)</u> , <i>Confessions</i> : I 7-8,11,13; II 9-18; III 2-4; IV 7-12; VI 18-20; VIII 10-12, 16, 19-21, 28-30; X 12-37 (the mind from within; moral psychology; mind as an inner theatre) B (I-X = Bk; 1,2,... = sections (in bold), not chs.)
17 TH CENTURY: EARLY MODERN PHILOSOPHY/MODERN PHILOSOPHY		
3	2/12	<u>Descartes (1641)</u> , <i>Meditations</i> (founding of modern concept of the mind; dualism): I, II, IV, VI (section 86 only) reprise of Augustine <i>Confessions</i> X 12-37 B
4	2/17	<u>Hobbes (1651)</u> <i>Leviathan</i> (humans driven by urge to survive or fear of death): Part I, Chapters 6, 10, 11, 13 Part II, Chapter 17 (optional) B
	2/19	<u>Spinoza (1677)</u> , <i>Ethics</i> , Books III-IV (anatomy of passions, derivation from love/joy/sadness; reason and passion) cont.

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Week	Date	Reading (P = Packet, B = Book)
4	2/19 cont	(SKIP 'Demonstrations' of the Propositions in the assignments that follow) Book III: Preface; Definitions; Postulates 1-2, Propositions 1-28[30], 50, [56], 59. Book IV: Preface; Definitions; Axiom; Propositions 1-8, 14-22, 25, 47 Book V: Preface; Axioms; Propositions 1-4 B

--2nd assessment--

18th CENTURY: MODERN PHILOSOPHY

5	2/24	<u>Hume</u> (1739), <i>A treatise of human nature</i> , Bk. II, Of the passions: Prt 1 scs 1-8, 12; Prt 2 sec 1; Prt 3 scs (1),3, 9 P
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	2/26	<u>Rousseau</u> (1755), <i>Discourse on inequality</i> (state of nature vs living in the minds of others): Preface, Prt I, Prt II (skip middle on political theory, pp.122-134, from "Such was or must have been the origin of society and laws" to "From the extreme inequality of conditions and fortunes" after the quote from Lucan, 5 paras. from end) B Reprise Descartes, Hobbes, Spinoza
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6	3/3	<u>Kant</u> (1785), <i>Groundwork of the metaphysic of morals</i> : Preface—pp. 3-5 P <u>Kant</u> (1798), <i>Anthropology from a pragmatic point of view</i> ("Anthropology" here is observation-based psychology): Preface (2 nd para. on physiological vs. pragmatic anthro.); Book I sections 1-2 (skip "Remark"); Book II sections 60-61, 67 (skip Remark); Book III sections 73-77; 80-82; 87 P
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19th CENTURY: MODERN PHILOSOPHY

6	3/5	<u>Herbart</u> (1834), <i>A textbook in psychology</i> (psychology as an empirical science): Intro secs 1,4, 6; Part I secs 10-11 (pp. 1-11); Part I sec 33 (p. 26); Part II sec 60, 61, 65 (pp.45-53); 107, 110, 111, 114-115, 118-119 (pp. 82-91); 127, 130 (pp. 97-99); Part III sec. 150-151 (pp. 119-120); 194-202 (pp. 151-160); 223 (pp. 175-176); 246-251 (pp. 197-200) P
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--3rd Assessment--

---Spring Break---

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Week	Date	Reading (P = Packet, B = Book)
7	3/17	<u>J.S. Mill</u> (1861), <i>Utilitarianism</i> , Chapters 1,2, and 4 P Reprise Epicurus (cont.) <u>James</u> (1890), <i>Principles of psychology</i> : Chapter XXVI (Will)- Pleasure and pain as springs of action (pp. 549-559) P
	3/19	<u>Nietzsche</u> (1887), <i>On the genealogy of morals</i> , Essay II P

19th-20th CENTURY: THE EMERGENCE OF EMPIRICAL PSYCHOLOGY AS A DISCIPLINE

8	3/24	<u>Wundt</u> (1892), <i>Lectures in human and animal psychology</i> , I, XIV (not 213-218), XV, XXV, XXIX (1 st edition, 1863) P
	3/26	<u>Freud</u> (1911) "Two principles in mental functioning"; <i>Beyond the pleasure principle</i> (1920) Chs. II, III, IV (pp. 12-24, 27-28), V (pp. 35-39)(general theory of mind) P reprise of Epicureans, Stoics, Descartes, Spinoza, Mill, James
9	3/31	<u>Freud</u> (1930), <i>Civilization and its discontents</i> , Chs. II-VII B (social theory) Reprise of Augustine, Hobbes, Rousseau, Nietzsche

--4th Assessment--

19th-20th CENTURY: THE CHILD STUDY MOVEMENT AND DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY

9	4/2 (Infancy)	Darwin (1877) A biographical sketch of an infant, <i>Mind</i> , 7 P <u>Preyer</u> (1881), <i>The mind of the child: Vol I</i> , Prt. I (Dev. senses) p. 1 (on adults), Ch. II pp. 81-89 (thinking without language), Ch. VII pp. 184-186 (feelings); Prt. II Ch. VIII, pp. 187-191 (development of the will) P <u>Piaget</u> (1936), <i>The origins of intelligence in children</i> : Intro sec 1 (biological problem of intelligence, functional invariants of intelligence) pp. 1-8; Prt I (Elementary sensorimotor adaptations) Ch. I (1 st stage, use of reflexes) 23-29 [29-36]; Chapter II (2 nd stage: 1 st acquired adaptations and primary circular reaction) pp. 47-51 (sucking) P
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Week	Date	Reading (P = Packet, B = Book)
10	4/7 (Childhood)	<u>Sully (1895)</u> , <i>Studies of childhood</i> : Ch. I (Intro.) pp. 1-2; Ch. II (imagination) pp. 25-32; Ch. III (reason) 64-67 P (cont.) <u>Piaget (1926)</u> , <i>The child's conception of the world</i> . P Introduction (skim pp. 1-10); Prt I Realism (Introduction and Ch. I, The notion of thought) 33-55, Ch. IV (Realism and origin of idea of participation) pp. 123-124, 131-140, 144, 150-153, 162-166 (from secs 2,3,4)

20th-21st CENTURY: MODERN PSYCHOLOGY

10	4/09	Behaviorism and Response Skinner, B.F. (1947) Superstition in the pigeon P Chomsky, N. (1959) Review of <i>Verbal behavior</i> by B.F. Skinner, pp. 3-33 P
11	4/13	Social Psychology; Overview of Contemporary Psychology Milgram, S. (1963) Behavioral study of obedience P Darley, J., & Latané, B. (1968) Bystander intervention in emergencies P Comer, R., & Gould, E. (2013) <i>Psychology around us</i> : Ch. 1 Psychology: Yesterday and today (pp. 2-33) P

--5th Assessment--

EASTERN PERSPECTIVES

11	4/16	Taoism—Chuang-Tzŭ (c. 320 B.C.). <i>Chuang-Tzŭ: The inner chapters</i> (A.C. Graham, trans.): Prt I (Introduction) Chs 1-7 (pp. 3-26); Prt II (The Inner Chapters) Ch. 2,5,6 (pp. 47-62, 76-84, 84-94) P
12	4/18	Buddhism: Rahula (1959), <i>What the Buddha taught</i> , Chs. I-V B

RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT

12	4/23	<u>Sartre (1947)</u> , Existentialism is a humanism (Modern Stoicism), pp. 17-54 P (week 12 continues next page)
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Week	Date	Reading (P = Packet, B = Book)
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12 (cont.)

--6th Assessment--

Reading Period

Prepare final project (Examine antecedents to a topic in contemporary psychology or track a particular line of thought, a question, or a controversy across periods)

Finals period

Final project due

Grading Rubric and Scholarship Expectations for Psy/Hum 210 Foundations of Psychological Thought

GRADING RUBRIC

Assessments

F Not submitted or decidedly weak effort

D Shows minimal comprehension of the material and minimal engagement with it; some effort to defend, as well as articulate, points; occasional good writing

C Competence with the material, engagement with it, some independent analysis, capably written and organized.

B Very good. Demonstrates high level of understanding and accurate representation of the texts, independent thinking, clear, well-organized writing.

A Superior. All the qualities of B and compelling original thought.

Final Project

F Not submitted or decidedly weak effort

D Minimally adequate: Formulation of a topic, an attempt to approach it systematically and follow through an idea; some demonstrated comprehension of course material; weaknesses on one or more of the preceding and/or in writing and organization.

C Adequate: Poses and develops a topic, mostly accurate portrayal of texts; coherently organized and decently written. Argument builds, but has gaps or loses momentum. Some original thought. May be less than convincing.

B Very good: Formulates and addresses a meaningful topic people would genuinely want to hear about. Good portrayal of texts, coherent organization and smooth, clear exposition. Systematic development of an argument or idea with some original thought.

A Superior. All of B on a very high level. Makes a genuine contribution.

EXPECTATIONS OF WRITING AND SCHOLARSHIP (see next page)

EXPECTATIONS OF WRITING AND SCHOLARSHIP

Citation Style

You may use any citation style you like, as long as you are consistent throughout an assignment. You need cite full references only once. Otherwise author and year will suffice (e.g., Descartes, 1641), though for authors up through Epictetus (i.e., up through 5th lecture), you can cite the initials of the text you are referring to: Aristotle, DA (*De anima*) and NE (*Nicomachean ethics*); Epicurus, LM (Letter to Menoeceus); Epictetus, Disc (*Discourses*).

All sources you use must be cited.

You can use the conventions introduced on the lecture PowerPoints for the citation of specific passages in the readings.

Permissible Sources

You are to use *only* the assigned texts as sources for assignments. Although you may use Russell (optional reading – see syllabus) for information on the social-political and historical context of the writers, the presentation and analysis of the writers' ideas—the focus of the course—should be yours and not Russell's or anyone else's.

Writing Aids

All writing is to be strictly your own. Although you may discuss questions and/or topics with your peers, what you write must be yours. The course is teaching you to both master and probe the material at hand and to compose and organize credible writing about it. Artificial compilers, like ChatGPT, are not to be used.

Research Engagement Assignment Overview

Spring 2026

Students in this course must complete a Research Engagement Assignment. There are two options: students may participate in psychology experiments for course credit or may opt to complete the Alternative Research Writing Assignment.

Four hours of experimental participation are assigned to any student in this course who has not already completed 8 hours of participation for other psychology courses in the past.

Students will have access to sign up for experiments beginning **February 15th** and must complete the required number of sessions by **April 30th** to pass the course.

Please refer to the Research Engagement Assignment document which will be posted on Canvas for complete details and instructions.

This assignment reflects the psychology department's belief that experiencing research as a participant adds greatly to a student's understanding of course material, particularly to the student's understanding of how psychologists study behavior. Your participation not only furthers your education about the nature of psychological research; it also makes a substantial, critical contribution to psychological research at Princeton and to science in general.

As an alternative to research participation, students may complete the research writing assignment. Each paper is worth 1 hour of credit. Four papers would be required if you choose not to participate in any experiments. Please see the Research Engagement Assignment document posted on Canvas for further details.

To be clear: Completing the Research Engagement Assignment by April 30th is a requirement for passing the course.

All questions pertaining to this assignment should be directed to RoseMarie Stevenson (rosemari@princeton.edu).

January 2024