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Outline of the Course

Aims and Objectives
- To introduce students to a range of research and theories in classic and contemporary social and developmental psychology.
- To develop an understanding of central debates within the disciplines.
- To develop intellectual skills in the critical analysis of social and developmental psychological theories and in the evaluation of empirical research.
- To develop oral and written communication skills through discussion in supervision and essay writing.
- To develop IT skills through the use of on-line bibliographies and word-processing.

Course content
This paper aims to provide students with a sound knowledge of classic and contemporary social and developmental psychology and the main areas of debate within these disciplines. It builds on the foundation established in PBS 1 and prepares students for advanced work in psychology in Part IIB. The course content is evenly divided between social and developmental psychology.

Michaelmas lectures focus on social psychology. These lectures are divided into five sections. Section 1—the social approach—introduces students to social psychology and several meta-theories useful throughout an analysis of all the topics. Section 2 focuses on positive psychology, including prosociality and well-being. Section 3 is
concerned with social construction and Section 4 with social cognition. Finally, section 5— traits and selfhood—reviews work on personality, motivation, and the self.

Lent lectures are concerned with developmental psychology. These lectures are divided into three sections. In section 6—the developmental approach—students are introduced to the principal concerns of developmental psychology. Section 7—social and emotional development—covers topics related to emotion, self-regulation, family, siblings, and peer-relationships. Section 8—cognitive development—then delves into constructivism, language, number concept, and executive functioning.

Mode of teaching
The paper is taught by means of lectures and supervisions.

Mode of assessment
The paper is examined by one three-hour unseen examination. Section A of the exam will cover social psychology and section B will cover developmental psychology. The exam will consist of 3 one-hour essays. Students will be required to complete at least 1 essay from each section—with the third essay allowed to come from either section A or B.

Lecture Locations and Time

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Michaelmas Term</th>
<th>Lent Term</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mondays 12-1pm</td>
<td>Biffen Lecture Theatre</td>
<td>Mill Lane Lecture Room 9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesdays 12-1pm</td>
<td>Mill Lane Lecture Room 9</td>
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Schedule

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<th>Date</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Section 1: The social approach</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 Oct</td>
<td>Alex Kogan</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
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<tr>
<td>14 Oct</td>
<td>Juliet Foster</td>
<td>History of social psychology</td>
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<td>19 Oct</td>
<td>Alex Kogan</td>
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<td>21 Oct</td>
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<td>Cultural social psychology</td>
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<td>Section 2: Positive psychology</td>
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<tr>
<td>26 Oct</td>
<td>Alex Kogan</td>
<td>Prosociality I</td>
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<td>28 Oct</td>
<td>Alex Kogan</td>
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<td>2 Nov</td>
<td>Alex Kogan</td>
<td>Well-being I</td>
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<td>Alex Kogan</td>
<td>Wellbeing II</td>
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<td>Section 3: Sociocultural approaches to social psychology</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 Nov</td>
<td>Juliet Foster</td>
<td>Sociocultural approaches I</td>
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<td>Juliet Foster</td>
<td>Sociocultural approaches II</td>
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<td>16 Nov</td>
<td>Philippe Gilchrist</td>
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<td>18 Nov</td>
<td>Philippe Gilchrist</td>
<td>Social Cognition II</td>
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<td>Section 5: Traits and selfhood</td>
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<td>23 Nov</td>
<td>Brian Little</td>
<td>Personality and motivation I</td>
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<td>25 Nov</td>
<td>Brian Little</td>
<td>Personality and motivation II</td>
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<tr>
<td>30 Nov</td>
<td>Philippe Gilchrist</td>
<td>The self I</td>
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<td>2 Dec</td>
<td>Philippe Gilchrist</td>
<td>The self II</td>
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<td>18 Jan</td>
<td>Michael Lamb</td>
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<td>Family influences on development I</td>
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<td>3 Feb</td>
<td>Susan Golombok</td>
<td>Family influences on development I</td>
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<td>Claire Hughes</td>
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<td>Piaget and constructivism I</td>
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<td>Claire Hughes</td>
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<td>Claire Hughes</td>
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<td>9 Mar</td>
<td>Rory Devine</td>
<td>Developing theory of mind III</td>
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**Supervision Arrangements**

Supervision is essential for this paper and students should expect to cover 6-7 topics from across the paper. If a student’s Director of Studies has not already made supervision arrangements for this paper, students should contact the Course Organiser at the beginning of term. Thus, it is essential that all students taking this paper attend the introductory lecture on 15 October.

**Readings**

Each lecturer on the course provides readings relevant to the particular topics that he or she covers. These are presented below. Individual lecturers and supervisors as appropriate may provide additional, more specialised references.

**Social Psychology—Michaelmas Term**

**Introduction - Dr Alex Kogan**

In our introduction, we will focus on three major questions. What is social psychology? What are the tools that we use to study the human mind within the field? What are the challenges the researchers face in attempting to understand how people function? Through these questions, the goal is for students to become critical consumers of psychological theories and findings, their limitations and implications, and understand broadly the degree to which we can apply findings from social psychology to daily living. We will also discuss a new movement within the field at self-reflection and correction.

**Essay Topics**
1) Does social psychology study the individual or groups? What implications does this have for the ecological fallacy and application of research findings to one’s own life?

2) What are the major difficulties in studying the human mind that social psychologist face?

3) “Most published research findings are false.” Discuss.

Readings

Bones, A. K. (in press). We knew the future all along: Scientific a priori hypothesizing is much more accurate than other forms of precognition. Perspectives on Psychological Science.


The History of Social Psychology - Dr Juliet Foster

Psychology is a diverse discipline. However, there is also considerable diversity in the philosophy and methods found in the sub-discipline of social psychology. Much of this diversity can be better understood if we consider the historical context of the development of social psychology, what has been referred to as the ‘long past and the short history’ of its development. Inescapable within this development are important questions of epistemology and of research methods: what have psychologists believed should be the focus of their discipline, how have they understood (and even constructed) these objects, and how have they aimed to study them?

Essay Topics

1) Is there one social psychology, or are there many social psychologies?
2) ‘The history of social psychology is irrelevant. What matters is where we are now.’ Discuss.
3) Is it right to suggest that ‘the social’ has been written out of social psychology?

Readings

Social psychology covers an amazingly diverse and rich number of topics. Sometimes, this diversity can feel completely disconnected from one another. In these two lectures, the aim is to provide a framework for contextualizing many theories and empirical findings within social psychology. The focus will be on presenting “meta-theories”, or theoretical tenets that are repeated across many different areas of psychology. In particular, we will focus on (a) biological and (b) cultural evolutionary frameworks.

**Essay Topics**

1) How are processes in biological and cultural evolution similar/different? What empirical data can be used to understand these frameworks?
2) What are theoretical weaknesses of the evolutionary approach? What are the theoretical weaknesses of the cultural approach? Is there a better way?
Readings


Prosocial Behavior- Dr Alex Kogan

Prosociality—kindness, altruism, and cooperation—are vital glues to healthy societal functioning. However, debate continues on why people engage in selfless acts. In these lectures, we will explore the factors that influence people to behave with kindness and cooperation. We will in particular review literature from the sociocultural appraisals, values, and emotions (SAVE) framework of prosociality.

Essay Topics
1) Choose three components of the SAVE framework? Provide empirical evidence for each.
2) “Oxytocin is the love hormone”. Why is this not true? Use evidence from both studies of oxytocin in the blood (blood plasma and/or oxytocin spray studies) and the oxytocin receptor gene.

Readings


**Well-being - Dr Alex Kogan**

What makes people happy? This age old question has puzzled philosophers, scientists, and lay people alike for thousands of years. Two common sources people turn to for achieving happiness are money and religion. We will discuss how research both supports and questions the utility of both money and religion to help people be happy. Additionally, we will discuss cross-national differences in well-being and factors that are associated with these differences. We will also discuss how emerging evidence suggests that too much happiness could be a bad thing, and the value of emotional stability and diversity.

**Essay Topics**

1) Discuss how money and religion might promote and inhibit happier lives.
2) What are the factors that explain differences in well-being across societies?
3) What are three ways we can promote happiness?
4) Is there such a thing as too much happiness?

**Readings**


**Sociocultural Approaches to Social Psychology - Dr Juliet Foster**

A number of approaches have developed within social psychology in recent years that aim to examine the relationship between individuals, social groups, societies and broader culture. Central to all of these is the idea that there is a reciprocal, or mutually co-constructive relationship between individual and society. Some of these theories will be examined in more depth. In particular, we will look at social representations theory, and its relationship to other approaches within the area, in particular those relating to ideas of identity.

**Essay Topics**

1) What concerns about social psychology are sociocultural approaches trying to address?
2) How do social representations relate to identity?
3) How can we study social representations?

**Readings**


Social Cognition – Dr Philippe Gilchrist

Social cognition concerns how we make sense of other people and their behaviour, and how our own thought processes can be influenced by various social and motivational processes. Often we are confronted by a conflict between attempting to understand and represent states in the world accurately, but at the same time, not wanting to, or not being able to, exert too much time and effort. Thus, for better or worse, people often see the social world with varying degrees of accuracy. Topics include dual process theories, stereotype and prejudice, cognitive dissonance and various biases and heuristics.

Essay topics:
1) Does everybody hold stereotypes?
2) People often use their own views and beliefs as a starting point when trying to make sense of others. Why can this be problematic?

Especially recommended are the following specialized textbooks:


These general social psychology textbooks also have good overview chapters:


**Supplementary Readings:**


These two lectures present a framework for studying personality, motivation and human well-being. We will examine and challenge some common assumptions about the nature of human nature and the factors that shape the course of human lives. Lecture 1 examines the influence of stable traits on well-being and human accomplishment. It concludes that traits, commonly understood, are necessary, but not sufficient, for a full account of how lives might prosper. Lecture 2 expands our concept of personality by introducing the concept of “free traits” and counter-dispositional behaviour (such as when biogenically introverted students act as pseudo-extraverts at college social events). Free traits are enacted in order to advance our personal projects. We will explore the proposition that the sustainable pursuit of a person’s core projects is an intrinsic aspect of human flourishing.

**Essay Topics**

1) Evaluate the proposition that personality traits are consequential for human well-being and accomplishment.

2) What features of personal projects are consequential for human flourishing?

**Readings**


**Self and Identity – Dr Philippe Gilchrist**

Who are you? Are you always the same “you”? How well do you know yourself? These questions have been the target of philosophical inquiries for millennia, but social psychology also has something to say about these fundamental questions. In these lectures, we will examine how the self-concept is formed and how we think about our past and future selves. We will also examine the ways in which we learn about ourselves, and the role that other people have to play in this process. Finally, we will discuss self-esteem, exploring where it comes from and how we cope with self-esteem threats.

**Essay Topics**

1) Is it possible for someone to act like one person when with their family and like a different person when with their friends? What are the consequences of self-concept consistency?

2) What does social psychology have to say about how the self changes over time? How is your present self similar to and different than your past self and your future self?

3) Consider the various ways we learn about ourselves. Are there some aspects of the self that we are more likely to learn about on our own, and other aspects that we are more likely to learn about from others? What would happen if these two sources of learning resulted in different conclusions?

4) Should parents and teachers make it a priority to increase children’s self-esteem?

**Readings**


Brummelman, E., Thomaes, S., de Castro, B. O., Overbeek, G., & Bushman, B. J. (2014). “That’s not just beautiful—that’s incredibly beautiful!” The adverse


Comments on this article, in the same issue of the journal:

**Developmental Psychology—Lent Term**

**Models of development – Professor Michael Lamb**

At first glance, babies seem to have very limited capacities to take in information, evaluate it, and respond effectively, and their understanding of the world in which they live appears primitive at best. With incredible rapidity, however, unique personalities, powerful social relationships, and fascinating cognitive and communicative skills become apparent, as children undergo the fastest and most dramatic changes to occur at any stage in the lifespan. Exactly how developmental change can be explained has fascinated developmental psychologists for more than a century, and we assess our current understanding this term, beginning with an examination of the developmental processes that appear to underlie development.

**Essay Topics**

1) What exactly develops in developmental psychology?
2) Compare linear, transactional, and contextual organisational theories of development.
3) In 1958, Anastasi wrote a paper called ‘Heredity, environment, and the question “how”’. How much better is our understanding of development in 20015 than it was in 1958?
**Readings**


**Risk and Resilience – Professor Claire Hughes**

The goals of this lecture are to outline how and why theoretical models of risk and resilience have been refined over time and to give some concrete examples of how these theoretical shifts have informed our understanding of child development. By highlighting the complex and dynamic interplay between different levels of risk and protective factors this lecture aims to illustrate the way in which many of the themes addressed in this half of the paper overlap with each other, leading to a useful cross-fertilization of ideas.

**Essay Topics**

1) How have ideas about risk and resilience changed since Bowlby’s work and why?

2) Why should resilience in childhood be characterized as ‘ordinary magic’ (Masten, 2001)?

**Readings**


**Educational Neuroscience – Dr Denes Szucs**

Non-invasive brain imaging methods are increasingly used in psychological and developmental research often with the intention of informing educational practice. However, a non-trivial connection has to be built between basic brain data and potential educational applications. Most importantly, a critical knowledge of methodology is absolutely necessary so that the goodness of studies could be judged and the studies’ added value (relative to purely behavioural research) could be evaluated. First, the lecture will review critical strengths and weaknesses of mainstream brain imaging methods. Second, some concrete examples will illustrate how neuroscience methods can provide otherwise difficult to access knowledge about cognitive development in primary school children. In addition, some typical interpretation problems will be pointed out.

**Essay Topics**

2) In what areas do you think neuroscience research can inform educational practice? Discuss why.
3) Illustrate some major dangers in (mis)interpreting brain imaging data.

**Readings**


Emotional Regulation – Professor Claire Hughes

Research interest in emotion regulation has grown rapidly in a number of different disciplines, as our understanding of the interplay between biology, cognition, behavior and culture has increased. At a cognitive level, this topic overlaps with the topics of theory of mind and executive function. At a behavioural level, emotion regulation is key to successful interactions with other children – such that there is an overlap with the lectures on siblings and peers. At a functional level, emotional regulation is central to accounts of individual differences in resilience. Thus this lecture, like the previous lecture, illustrates the interplay between different themes in this paper.

Essay Topics

1) How have research ideas about emotion regulation changed over the past three decades and why?

Readings


Family influences on development - Traditional and nontraditional families – Professor Susan Golombok

Two lectures will explore family influences on development. The first lecture will examine family influences on development in traditional families focusing on four
inter-related components; the quality of parent-child relationships with particular attention to attachment theory and parenting styles; the psychological wellbeing of parents; the psychological characteristics of the child; and the wider social environment of the family. The second lecture will examine family influences on development in non-traditional families focusing on families with single parents, cohabiting parents, and stepparents, as well as new family forms such as families with same-sex parents and families created by assisted reproductive technologies. The relative contribution of family structure and family processes for development will be explored.

**Essay Topics**

1) Do psychologists place too much emphasis on the importance of children's attachment relationships with their parents?
2) Do children benefit from growing up in a traditional family?

**Readings**


**Siblings and Peers – Professor Claire Hughes**

Most of us grow up with brothers and sisters, and there are striking individual differences in the quality of sibling relationships. Yet it is only in the last 20 years that this topic has received systematic investigation. The sibling relationship is often emotionally charged, and parents frequently compare siblings with each other. Siblings may therefore directly foster both aggression and low self-esteem. Indirect paths via negative parent-child relationships have also been documented. In general, however, sibling relationships are very supportive, and may foster children’s imaginative play, co-operative skills, emotion and theory of mind understanding. Friends and peers also play a role in children’s development, acting as a support during stressful times, or for children with poor familial relationships. Observations of friends enable developmental psychologists to witness children at their most mature: unlike siblings, friends can break the relationship if they are not happy, so that children are (usually) motivated to show prosocial behaviour towards their friends. Interestingly, not all friendships are protective, and researchers now focus on the
identity and quality of friendships rather than the simple number of friendships (as indexed in socio-metric studies).

**Essay Topics**

1) Why is a developmental perspective useful in understanding child-child relationships?
2) Explain how siblings can help or hinder children’s social or cognitive development.
3) From peas in a pod to chalk and cheese: Why do sibling relationships show such striking variability?
4) Compare and contrast the influences of friendship and popularity on child outcomes.

**Readings**


**Piaget and constructivism – Professor Michael Lamb**

The nature-nurture debate constitutes one of the enduring controversies shaping developmental psychology. Another involves the ways in which people are characterized – either as passive recipients of external influence or as active participants in their own development and transformation and the extent to which behaviour and behavioural development are context dependent.

**Essay Topics**

1) William James once described the newborn world as one of ‘booming, buzzing confusion.’ How might a constructivist respond?
2) The Piagetian and information-processing views of cognitive development are as different as chalk and cheese. Discuss.
3) What is cognitive development the development of?
4) ‘Theory of mind’ has become the prism through which development has been studied most profitably. Discuss.

Readings


Language development – Professor Michael Lamb

Infants typically say their first words at about 10 months, and put together their first two-word sentence at about 18 months. By their fifth birthday, they have a vocabulary of over 5,000 words and can convey remarkably complex information. How do they do it?

Essay Topics

1) Learning to use grammar and learning communication are two entirely different processes. Discuss.
2) Can we learn about language development by studying the acquisition of second languages?

Readings

Numerical Development – Dr Denes Szucs

Mathematical skills are increasingly important if individuals are to thrive in today's technologically-oriented society. However, evidence suggests that many adults in developed societies possess quite immature mathematical abilities. A 2011 Department for Business, Innovation and Skills survey in the United Kingdom found that 49% of the adult population could only attain standards comparable to 11 year-old children in mathematics (whereas 14.9% achieved such standards in literacy). Furthermore, 23.7% of adults reached only the standards typical for 9 year-old children (compared to 7.1% for literacy). As may be expected from these figures, research on mathematical learning problems lags well behind research on literacy problems, and takes longer to affect educational instruction. Crucially, the significance of early years in grounding mathematical development is increasingly recognized. The lecture will outline major conflicting theories of the development of mathematical abilities and will discuss recent evidence from large scale studies focusing on the UK context.

Essay Topics

1) Evaluate critically the measurement of the so called ‘number sense’.
2) How various cognitive abilities are thought to be linked to mathematical development/achievement of children?

Readings


**Developmental dyscalculia – Dr Denes Szucs**

We define developmental dyscalculia as persistently weak mathematical performance of developmental origin, related to the weakness of some kind(s) of cognitive function(s) and/or representation(s); appearing when concurrent motivation to study mathematics and access to appropriate mathematics education is normal. The causes of developmental dyscalculia are poorly understood. Hence, it is not surprising that there is no generally agreed upon functional definition of developmental dyscalculia. In fact, conditions which may or may not be equivalent to DD are labelled by many different names in developmental research. We will critically review some conflicting definitions and theories of developmental dyscalculia and related empirical data.

**Essay Topics**

1) Detail some major theories of developmental dyscalculia.

2) How does the interplay of non-symbolic and symbolic magnitude representations relate to the question of the definition of dyscalculia?

3) Do you think dyscalculia can be traced back to a single factor, or is a heterogenous umbrella term?

**Readings**


**Developing a Theory of Mind — Prof Claire Hughes & Dr Rory Devine**

Lecture 1 (Hughes) will provide an introduction to the history of research on children’s theory of mind and examine the ways in which theory of mind research has extended beyond the pre-school years. Specifically, this lecture answers the following questions: Why is the term ‘theory of mind’ used? Who coined it, and why? Why is the false-belief task so widely-used and what are the problems with this task? How can theory of mind be measured beyond the pre-school years?

Lecture 2 (Hughes) considers the range of social influences on individual differences in children’s performance on tests of theory of mind. Accelerated development of false-belief comprehension is reported for securely attached children, children from large families and children from families characterised by high levels of feeling-state talk. Evidence from hearing impaired children and twins also highlight the importance of conversations for theory-of-mind development.
Lecture 3 (Devine) examines the cognitive influences on children’s theory of mind. This lecture critically assesses developmental theories about the relations between language, executive function and theory of mind by examining data from longitudinal and intervention studies.

**Essay Topics**

1. Early theory-of-mind research focused on the preschool years. In adopting a broader developmental focus, has the baby been thrown out with the bathwater?
2. How do families help and hinder the development of young children’s theory of mind?
3. How might the relations between executive function and theory of mind be best explained?

**Readings**


