Department of Psychology
PBS Tripos Part IIB
PBS 7 for 2017/2018
Psychology and Social Issues

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Supervision
Six to eight supervisions are recommended, excluding any revision sessions. Because lecturers teach close to their research interests, students should seek supervision directly from them; where lecturers do not supervise themselves they will recommend others who can. The onus is on students to contact lecturers and arrange supervisions, but this is not usually necessary in advance of the lectures for that topic. We recommend that supervisions be scheduled close to the time of the corresponding lectures: many lecturers will give details of supervision arrangements in their first lecture. Students are advised to have supervisions in at least three of the modules, and are encouraged to consider a broad range of subjects.

Aims and objectives

- To use psychology to understand and, where possible, address major social issues (main aim).
- To become familiar with the methods required to study and intervene in the social world outside the laboratory.
- To bridge the academic and non-academic divide.

Course content
This is an advanced level paper. The paper can be thought of as an attempt to examine some of the contributions that psychology and the social science more generally can offer to society. Areas to be examined vary from year to year. This year, lectures will address the the transition to parenthood; social and political aspects of assisted reproduction psychology; social perspectives on mental health; intellectual disabilities; the application of psychology in business and marketing, and attachment theory and policy.

Mode of teaching
The paper is taught by means of several sets of lectures. Lectures will be held on Tuesday from 2-4pm. All lectures will be in the Psychology Department lecture theatre.

PBS 9 Examiners’ Report 2017

Please note that in 2016-17 the course code for Psychology and Social Issues was PBS 9. Students’ attention is drawn to the Examiners’ Report for this course for last year, and invited to consider this in their own preparation.

In June 2017, twenty-nine PBS students took the PBS 9 Psychology and Social Issues paper. It was also borrowed by one HSPS student and taken by two BBS students. Nine students achieved a First class result in this paper, three were awarded a 2:2 and the remainder received a 2:1. All scripts were double-blind marked and then the examiner and assessor compared
marks to agree a final mark for each candidate. This process worked extremely well and ensured rigorous consideration of all essays.

In general, work was of a good standard with some very good essays. Students’ performance across the three essays was generally very even, with rare examples of students excelling in one or essay but underperforming in others, and there were very few examples of poor time-keeping. This is important, since the total mark given is the average of the three marks awarded for the essays.

As is often the case with this paper, some questions were much more popular than others, although all questions were attempted by at least one candidate. The most popular questions were Q6 from the transition to parenthood topic (21 answers), Q3 which related to the social perspectives on mental health problems lectures (15 answers) and Q8 on the topic of forensic child interviewing (12 answers). Although the average mark for each question was somewhere in the mid-2:1 range, it is interesting that the average marks for these three questions are all slightly on the low side of this range, suggesting that some candidates did not tackle these questions in as much depth as they might have done. Indeed, there was a tendency for some weaker answers to remain at a level that was quite descriptive. Better answers not only engaged carefully and closely with the question but took a more analytical (and sometimes critical) approach to the material under discussion. Better answers were also able to bring in a variety of literature to back up their arguments, going beyond that which was discussed in the lectures or given as key readings.

Dr Juliet Foster - Examiner

Dr Sophie Zadeh - Assessor
Lecture Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lecturer</th>
<th>Title of lecture</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Michaelmas term</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr Irenee Daly</td>
<td>Transitions to parenthood</td>
<td>Weeks 1, 2 and 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr Sophie Zadeh</td>
<td>Social and political aspects of assisted reproduction</td>
<td>Weeks 4 and 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr Juliet Foster</td>
<td>Social psychology and mental health problems</td>
<td>Weeks 6, 7 and 8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lent term</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr Isabel Clare</td>
<td>Intellectual disabilities</td>
<td>Weeks 1, 2 and 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr Helena Rubinstein</td>
<td>Applying the behavioural sciences: psychology in the</td>
<td>Weeks 4 and 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr Robbie Duchinsky</td>
<td>debating classification, screening and early</td>
<td>Weeks 6 and 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO LECTURE</td>
<td></td>
<td>Week 8</td>
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Mode of assessment

One three-hour written examination at the end of the year from an undivided paper.

Outline of Lectures

1. Timing of and Transition to Parenting.
   DR IRENEE DALY

These three lectures will focus on the transition to and the impact of becoming a parent. Pregnancy and the transition to parenthood is a major developmental period with important implications for parents, for the infant-parent relationship, and the infant's development. While it is important to investigate parenting for its impact on children there is also a need to recognise the tremendous influence this transition has on the lives of individual mothers and fathers. With this in mind, Lecture 2 will focus on the impact of parenting on the mental health of mothers and fathers, while Lecture 3 will look at the consequences of becoming a parent on career progression and participation in the labour force.

Lecture 1: Transition to Parenthood


Transition to Motherhood:


Eija Sevón, E. (2012). 'My life has changed, but his life hasn't': Making sense of the gendering of parenthood during the transition to motherhood. *Feminism & Psychology, 22*(1), 60-80.


Transition to Fatherhood:


Possible essay titles:

1) Compare and contrast the major influences for men and women in the transition to parenthood.

2) What are the main psychological and social/institutional factors that influence when women become mothers?

3) What are the main psychological and social/institutional factors that influence when men become father?

Lecture 2: The impact of becoming a parent on mental health:


Possible essay titles:

1) Why might a man or woman become depressed when they become a parent?
2) What is the long-term impact of becoming a parent on a person’s mental health?
3) Does becoming a parent cause depression?

Lecture 3. The effect of the workplace on becoming and being a parent


Possible essay titles:

1) Discuss how the workplace influences men’s experience of parenting.

2) What are the main workplace issues that could influence motherhood timing?

3) How does parenthood effect gender inequality in the workplace?

2. Social and political issues in assisted reproduction (2 x 2 hour lectures)

DR SOPHIE ZADEH

These four lectures will examine the social and political aspects of assisted reproduction, specifically, reproduction using donor eggs, sperm, and/or a surrogate. The first lecture will offer an introduction to the political landscape of assisted reproductive technologies (ARTs), explaining who does (and does not) have access to them, and why this is the case. The second and third lectures will focus on public attitudes, professional perspectives, and personal uses of ARTs, using key case studies from the UK and elsewhere. The final lecture will specifically address the question of whether ARTs constitute a ‘special case’ in terms of biotechnology and/or health. The lectures will also explore the theoretical perspectives that might be used to think through the social and political aspects of assisted reproduction.

1. How do assisted reproductive technologies challenge social values, ideas and practices? Discuss with reference to at least two theoretical models.
2. Are assisted reproductive technologies thought of in the same way as other aspects of EITHER health OR biotechnology? If so, why? If not, why not?

3. What, if anything, is reproduced in assisted reproduction?

**General readings and theoretical texts**


**Public debate**


**Perspectives from/in the clinic**


**Personal uses**


**Biotechnology & health**


**3. Social perspectives on mental health**

**DR JULIET FOSTER**
Learning objectives:

- To introduce a discussion of the dominant and alternative paradigms in understanding mental health and mental health problems
- To consider the different ways in which society impacts upon mental ill health, in terms of:
  - Its treatment of mental ill health through history
  - Societal factors in the causation of mental ill health
  - Social constructionism

This first of these six hours aims to introduce some of the different paradigms within understandings of mental ill health: in particular, the dominant biomedical, psychiatric model will be discussed, along with alternatives to it, including anti-psychiatry, and more ‘social’ approaches. In the second hour, we will consider the role that society’s understanding of madness and mental illness has played in the treatment of mental illness, focusing on the development of asylums, and changes within them. We will also look at other dominant movements within treatment, such as ‘moral management’. The third hour will discuss the different societal factors which have been implicated in the causation and development of mental ill health. In the last three hours, a more social constructionist perspective will be taken: how do the public, mental health professionals and clients of the mental health services understand mental health and illness, and what are the implications of this understanding? In the final lecture, the developing mental health service user/survivor movement will be considered in more detail, including the attempts by some groups within this movement to reclaim and redefine ‘madness’.

Possible essay titles:

- A 'social' theory of 'mental illness' - a contradiction in terms. Discuss.
- Why study public understanding of mental ill health?
- Does the development of psychiatric understanding negate the need for any other approach to mental health?
- Is the development of the mental health service user movement over the past decade ‘the single most striking development in the mental health service’?

General readings:


Lecture 1a: Paradigms in mental health


Lecture 1b: Social history of mental health  

Lecture 2a: Social factors in mental health problems  

Lecture 2b: Public and professional perspectives on mental ill health and their implications  
**Attitude theory and general ideas of public on mental illness**  


Wider social psychological theories of public and professional understanding, including social representations theory


Foster, J.L.H. (2010) Perpetuating stigma?: Differences between advertisements for psychiatric and non-psychiatric medication in two professional journals. Journal of Mental Health 19(1) 26-33


Lecture 3a: Client/Patient/Survivor perspectives on mental ill health and their implications


Lecture 3b: The mental health service user movement: research and implications for the future


Websites:
Mental Health Foundation http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk
Rethink http://www.rethink.org/
SANE (Schizophrenia a National Emergency) http://www.sane.org.uk
MIND http://www.mind.org.uk
Depression Alliance http://www.depressionalliance.org
MDF – the Bipolar Organisation http://www.mdf.org.uk
Recovery in the Bin - https://recoveryinthebin.org/
4. Intellectual Disabilities
DR ISABEL CLARE

Outline and reading list to follow.

5. Applying the behavioural sciences: psychology in the world of business and marketing
DR HELENA RUBINSTEIN

When you ask lay people about psychology they tend to think of clinical or educational applications. But since the beginning of the 20th Century, psychologists have also been operating in the commercial sector. For many years psychologists have been influential in market research, marketing and advertising. Today, commercial organisations are turning to behavioural science (formally known as social psychology!) for ways to improve their understanding of consumers and to design better products and services.

The overall aim of these lectures is to show how theories and models taken from the academic sphere can be practically applied in the commercial world to good effect. Lecture 1 will focus on theories and applications in marketing and communications. Lecture 2 will focus on theories and applications of behavioural science in other parts of the corporation.

Suggested essay titles Lecture 1:

- In what ways are people motivated to buy products and services? Use relevant examples of motivational theories to illustrate your answer?

- In what ways could psychology be used unethically in business and how could we ensure its proper use?

Suggested essay titles Lecture 2:

- Companies commission market research to find out whether or not people intend to buy their products. They often find that there is a gap between what people say they will do and their actual behaviour. How can we work out what factors drive people’s behaviour and what can be done to reduce the intention-behaviour gap?

- People can buy pills to treat heartburn and stomach ulcers from high street pharmacies. The pack instructions indicate that people should take one tablet a day, one hour before breakfast for a maximum of 14 days. If taken more frequently or for longer there may be unpleasant side effects such as nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and dizziness. The manufacturer of the drug is
concerned that people will not take the tablets as instructed. Using an appropriate model of behaviour change, how would you identify the behaviours that need to be influenced and what might be done to ensure that people comply with instructions?

Reading list

To follow


DR ROBBIE DUSCHINSKY

Attachment theory is a major paradigm in developmental psychology, but it has also come in for criticism over decades as a force for political conservatism. Why might this be? And what are the consequences of such a characterisation? Though attention will be given to the origins of attachment theory in the work of John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth, the lectures will focus particularly on the fallout from the introduction of Hesse and Main’s concept of ‘fright without solution’ in the 1990s, generally taken to mean that an infant experiences a conflict between a desire to approach and flee from a frightening parent when confronted by the Strange Situation. These lectures will critically examine debates around disorganised infant attachment, the social significance of attachment theory, and the early intervention agenda.

Sample questions:

1) Why should attachment theory and research appeal to EITHER [pick one] right-wing OR left-wing policy makers?

2) Psychological classifications, such as those used to code the infant Strange Situation, are valuable but dangerous tools. Discuss.

Brief reading list:


