

The University of British Columbia, Okanagan  
**Philosophy of Psychology**

PHIL 446 101

Winter 2021–22, Term 2

Course Type: Online Lecture | Wed/Fri, 15:30–17:00 (PST) | Location: Zoom

**Important Dates:** [Jan 10](#) (start of term), [Jan 12](#) (first class), [Jan 24](#) (last day to withdraw without a W standing), [Feb 21–25](#) (midterm break), [Mar 18](#) (last day to withdraw with a W standing; course cannot be dropped after this date), [Apr 8](#) (last class), [Apr 11](#) (end of term), [April 14–29](#) (final exams)

**Course Instructor:** Michael Barkasi ([michael.barkasi@ubc.ca](mailto:michael.barkasi@ubc.ca))

Office Hours: by Zoom, 14:30–15:30 (PST) or by appointment. Please email for the Zoom link.

**Prerequisites:** 12 credits of PHIL and/or PSYO

**Lecture Delivery:** This is a remotely delivered course. [Lectures with discussion will be held by Zoom at the scheduled course time \(15:30–17:00 PST\) every Wednesday and Friday.](#) The Zoom lectures will be accessible through Canvas. Zoom lectures may be recorded, if we as a class decide to. If recorded, only the lectures themselves will be recorded (not discussion) and student privacy will be respected at all times in accordance with all UBC policies. No students will ever be recorded during a Zoom session. Detailed lecture slides will always be posted to Canvas. There will be no in-person interactions or activities on campus.

**Required Course Texts:** All required readings will be available either freely on the internet, or through a UBC library link. Links will be posted to Canvas, under "[Library Online Course Reserves](#)". There is no textbook to purchase.

**Course Description:** Are introspection and behavioral measures valid ways to study the mind? Does psychology just reduce to neuroscience? Are folk psychological states like experiences, beliefs, and desires real in the first place? What can exciting new advances in manipulating and decoding neural activity teach us about how the mind works? Should we be worried about whether work in psychology can be replicated? This course will examine these and other philosophical issues which arise from the scientific field of psychology.

**Course goals:** Students will learn the central concepts needed to understand debates over the foundations and practice of psychology. We will cover the rudiments and basic history of these debates. In addition, students will learn about the strengths and weaknesses of some historical and contemporary methods in psychology. Finally, students will improve their ability to do

philosophical analysis by writing a short paper on one of the philosophical issues covered in the course.

### Class Requirements:

- **Weekly Quizzes (25% of total grade):** At the end of most [Friday classes](#) (see the schedule) a quiz will open on Canvas covering the material from that week. You have [one week](#) to complete the quiz—due by the end the next Friday's class. Quizzes mostly cover only material from the lectures and slides, but may have a question from the required readings not covered during lecture or on the slides. The quizzes will be [multiple-choice, 5-10 questions](#). The quizzes are [open-book and unproctored](#). The quizzes are [timed \(20 minutes\)](#). [No extensions or redos](#) will be given, for any reason, including for technical difficulties. Instead of extensions and redos, the lowest two quiz scores will be dropped.
- **Midterm Exam (20% of total grade):** There will be a midterm exam given in lieu of our week 6, [Friday February 18](#) meeting. It will consist of [short-essay questions](#). Students will have [three hours to take the exam](#). It can be taken any time during the day (February 18). The midterm is [open-book and unproctored](#). It may be checked by for plagiarism by TurnItIn or instructor search.
- **Final exam (20% of total grade):** There will be a final exam given during a time scheduled during the exam period (April 14—29, time/date TBA). Like the midterm, it will consist of [short-essay questions](#) (plus some survey and reflection questions). The final is [open-book and unproctored](#). It may be checked by for plagiarism by TurnItIn or instructor search.
- **Paper (35% of total grade):** [2-3,000 words on a topic of your choice](#), with instructor approval. Example topics will be provided for those who need suggestions. A rubric will be provided and expectations clearly laid out, no later than the midterm. Papers are due by the start of class, week 10, [March 18](#). They will be submitted on Canvas and may be checked for plagiarism on TurnItIn or by instructor search. An [optional revision](#), based on instructor feedback, will be due by the day of our last class meeting ([April 8](#)). The grade on the revised paper will [replace the original paper grade](#) (if it's higher).

### Course policies:

- **Missed quizzes:** [No extensions or redos will be given for quizzes, no exceptions, including for technical difficulties.](#) (Instead, your lowest two quizzes will be dropped.)
- **Midterm makeups:** Alternative arrangements for the midterm will be granted for students who are unable to take the midterm on the scheduled day, if there are circumstances that necessitate it. These alternative arrangements must be made ahead of time (preferably at least a week in advance); students who miss the midterm without alternative arrangements in place ahead of time will be allowed to makeup the midterm at the instructor's discretion, but a legitimate excuse is required. If you miss the midterm without a legitimate excuse, you may be allowed to makeup the midterm, but with a point reduction worth 10% of the total possible points (e.g., if the midterm is scored on a scale of 30 points, the reduction will be 3 points).
- **Final exam makeups:** Alternative arrangements and makeups will not be allowed, except as required by university policy.

- **Open-book policy:** It is expected that students will complete quizzes, midterm, and final exam on their own without help from any other person. But, students may use their notes, the articles covered in class, and other materials that have been provided by the instructor. Google or other internet searching is not allowed, nor, once you have started the quiz or exam, are you allowed to ask a classmate or friend for help in any way. If you take a quiz or exam before a classmate, you cannot communicate to them the questions or anything that may give them an unfair advantage. “Open-book” means only that you are allowed to use your notes, articles covered in class, and other materials provided by the instructor. When in doubt, ask for clarification.
- **Paper:** Late papers will be accepted, with a possible reduction in points, although the instructor reserves the right to refuse to accept a late paper if the circumstances are unreasonable or the paper is extremely late. Papers turned in late without reasonable mitigating circumstances or prior arrangements may incur a reduction in points worth up to 10% of the total possible points (e.g., if the paper is scored out of 30 points, the reduction may be up to 3 points). It’s best that you contact me as soon as possible if you’re going to be late (preferably before the due date).
- **Attendance:** Attendance will not be taken or factored directly into your grade, but attending the Zoom lectures are your best opportunity to interact with me and ask questions about the material. It is strongly recommended that you attend all Zoom lectures possible.
- **Intellectual property and recordings:** All course materials (including this syllabus, slides, assignments, quizzes, exam, paper rubrics), except the outside assigned articles, are the intellectual property of the course instructor and cannot be reproduced in any way without my permission. Assigned articles are the intellectual property of their respective copyright holders and usually cannot be reproduced or posted publicly. Please do not attempt to record any portion of the lectures in any way without permission.

**Academic Integrity:** The academic enterprise is founded on honesty, civility, and integrity. As members of this enterprise, all students are expected to know, understand, and follow the codes of conduct regarding academic integrity. At the most basic level, this means submitting only original work done by you and acknowledging all sources of information or ideas and attributing them to others as required. This also means you should not cheat, copy, or mislead others about what is your work. Violations of academic integrity (i.e., misconduct) lead to the breakdown of the academic enterprise, and therefore serious consequences arise and harsh sanctions are imposed. For example, incidences of plagiarism or cheating may result in a mark of zero on the assignment or exam and more serious consequences may apply if the matter is referred to the President’s Advisory Committee on Student Discipline. Careful records are kept in order to monitor and prevent recurrences. A more detailed description of academic integrity, including the University’s policies and procedures, may be found in the Academic Calendar at <http://okanagan.students.ubc.ca/calendar/index.cfm?tree=3,54,111,0>.

**Academic Freedom:** During this pandemic, the shift to online learning has greatly altered teaching and studying at UBC, including changes to health and safety considerations. Keep in mind that some UBC courses might cover topics that are censored or considered illegal by non-

Canadian governments. This may include, but is not limited to, human rights, representative government, defamation, obscenity, gender or sexuality, and historical or current geopolitical controversies. If you are a student living abroad, you will be subject to the laws of your local jurisdiction, and your local authorities might limit your access to course material or take punitive action against you. UBC is strongly committed to academic freedom, but has no control over foreign authorities (please visit

<http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/okanagan/index.cfm?tree=3,293,866,0> for an articulation of the values of the University conveyed in the Senate Statement on Academic Freedom). Thus, we recognize that students will have legitimate reason to exercise caution in studying certain subjects. If you have concerns regarding your personal situation, consider postponing taking a course with manifest risks, until you are back on campus or reach out to your academic advisor to find substitute courses. For further information and support, please visit:

<https://provost.ok.ubc.ca/academic-leadership/>.

**UBC Okanagan Disability Resource Centre:** The Disability Resource Centre ensures educational equity for students with disabilities and chronic medical conditions. If you are disabled, have an injury or illness and require academic accommodations to meet the course objectives, please contact Earlene Roberts, the Diversity Advisor for the Disability Resource Centre located in the University Centre building (UNC 215). Email: [drc.questions@ubc.ca](mailto:drc.questions@ubc.ca). Web: [www.students.ok.ubc.ca/drc](http://www.students.ok.ubc.ca/drc).

**UBC Okanagan Equity and Inclusion Office:** Through leadership, vision, and collaborative action, the Equity & Inclusion Office (EIO) develops action strategies in support of efforts to embed equity and inclusion in the daily operations across the campus. The EIO provides education and training from cultivating respectful, inclusive spaces and communities to understanding unconscious/implicit bias and its operation within in campus environments. UBC Policy 3 prohibits discrimination and harassment on the basis of BC's Human Rights Code. If you require assistance related to an issue of equity, educational programs, discrimination or harassment please contact the EIO. UNC 325H 250.807.9291. Email: [equity.ubco@ubc.ca](mailto:equity.ubco@ubc.ca).

**Health & Wellness:** At UBC Okanagan health services to students are provided by Health and Wellness. Nurses, physicians and counsellors provide health care and counselling related to physical health, emotional/mental health and sexual/reproductive health concerns. As well, health promotion, education and research activities are provided to the campus community. If you require assistance with your health, please contact Health and Wellness for more information or to book an appointment. UNC 337 250.807.9270 email: [healthwellness.okanagan@ubc.ca](mailto:healthwellness.okanagan@ubc.ca) Web: [www.students.ok.ubc.ca/health-wellness](http://www.students.ok.ubc.ca/health-wellness).

**Student Learning Hub:** The Student Learning Hub (LIB 237) is your go-to resource for free math, science, writing, and language learning support. The Hub welcomes undergraduate students from all disciplines and year levels to access a range of supports that include tutoring in math, sciences, languages, and writing, as well as help with study skills and learning strategies. For more information, please visit the Hub's website (<https://students.ok.ubc.ca/student-learning-hub/>) or send email to [learning.hub@ubc.ca](mailto:learning.hub@ubc.ca).

# Schedule:

This schedule is tentative. [Assigned readings](#) are all available by link on Canvas, under "[Library Online Course Reserves](#)". The readings assigned for each week need not be read before the start of class, but should be read before you take the quiz for that week's material. Quizzes may include questions from the readings not covered in lecture.

Early debates over methodology and foundational assumptions

## Week 1: Introspection as research methodology

Wed, Jan 12	What is psychology? Introspection as a method of psychological study	Edward Titchener (1912), "Prolegomena to a study of introspection"	
Fri, Jan 14	Is introspection reliable or theory-neutral?	Eric Schwitzgebel (2004), "Introspective training apprehensively defended"; Uljana Feest (2012), "Introspection as a method and as a feature of consciousness"	

## Week 2: Behaviorism—Not what you were taught

Wed, Jan 19	The behaviorist approach to psychology	John Watson (1913), "Psychology as the behaviorist views it"	
Fri, Jan 21	The behaviorist defense of introspection?	Margaret Washburn (1922), "Introspection as an objective method"	Quiz 1 due by end of class

## Week 3: The beginnings of contemporary psychology

Wed, Jan 26	Are psychological states brain states?	Ullin Place (1956), "Is consciousness a brain process?"; John Smart (1959), "Sensations and brain processes"	
Fri, Jan 28	The information-processing approach	Stephen Palmer and Ruth Kimchi (1986), "The information processing approach to cognition"	Quiz 2 due by end of class

Do we even need psychology? The question of reduction to neuroscience

## Week 4: Classic debates over the reduction to neuroscience

Wed, Feb 2	Against reducing psychology to neuroscience: Psychological laws and generalizations	Jerry Fodor (1974), "Special sciences"; Zenon Pylyshyn (1984, chapter 1), "The explanatory vocabulary of cognition"	
Fri, Feb 4	The case for reducing psychology to neuroscience	Paul Churchland (1981), "Eliminative materialism and the propositional attitudes"	Quiz 3 due by end of class

## Week 5: Contemporary arguments against reduction

Wed, Feb 9	The representationalist approach to saving psychological explanation	Fred Dretske (1988, chapter 3), "Representational systems" and (chapter 4) "The explanatory role of belief"	
Fri, Feb 11	The mechanistic approach to psychology reduction	William Bechtel (2007), "Reducing psychology while maintaining its autonomy via mechanistic explanation"	Quiz 4 due by end of class

## Week 6: Midterm Exam

Wed, Feb 16	How to write a philosophy paper		Paper assignment and grading rubric distributed today
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Fri, Feb 18	Midterm Exam		Open all day, must be completed by 23:59 PST
Week 7: Midterm Break			
Wed, Feb 23	Midterm Break (no class)		
Fri, Feb 25	Midterm Break (no class)		
Week 8: The contemporary turn back to neuroscience			
Wed, Mar 2	The contemporary turn back to neuroscience: The mind as neural system	Chris Eliasmith (2003), "Moving beyond metaphors"	
Fri, Mar 4	Mental representations: Posited or observed?	Eric Thomson and Gualtiero Piccinini (2018), "Neural representations observed"	
Philosophical issues with modern methods in psychology			
Week 9: Problems with studying consciousness			
Wed, Mar 9	How to study consciousness scientifically	Francis Crick and Christof Koch (1998), "Consciousness and neuroscience"	
Fri, Mar 11	Separating consciousness from its report: Problems with Binocular rivalry	Ned Block (2019), "What is wrong with the no-report paradigm and how to fix it"	Quiz 5 due by end of class
Week 10: Neural decoding			
Wed, Mar 16	More problems measuring consciousness via behavior: Visual neglect and blindsight	Ian Phillips (2016), "Consciousness and criterion"	
Fri, Mar 18	Is neural decoding really mind reading?	Lee de-Wit et al (2016), "Is neuroimaging measuring information in the brain?"; J. Ritchie et al (2017), "Decoding the brain"	Quiz 6 due by end of class; paper due by end of the day (23:59 PST)
Week 11: Optogenetics and neural network modeling			
Wed, Mar 23	What can we learn from optogenetic interventions?	Jacqueline Sullivan (2018), "Optogenetics, pluralism, and progress"; Sarah Robins (2018), "Memory and optogenetic intervention"	
Fri, Mar 25	Using artificial neural networks to model the brain	Daniel Yamins et al (2014), "Performance-optimized hierarchical models predict neural responses in higher visual cortex"; Daniel Yamins and James DiCarlo (2016) "Using goal-driven deep learning models to understand sensory cortex"	Quiz 7 due by end of class; graded papers returned by today
Week 12: How to study mindreading			
Wed, Mar 30	What do tests of implicit mentalizing show?	Cecilia Heyes (2014), "Submentalizing"	
Fri, Apr 1	Does evidence for mindreading in nonhuman animals need to rule out behavioral explanations?	Marta Halina (2015), "There is no special problem of mindreading in nonhuman animals"	Quiz 8 due by end of class
Week 13: Construct validity and replication			

Wed, Apr 6	How do we know when psychology tests are measuring something real? The IAT and mental illness as case studies	Uljana Feest (2020), "Construct validity in psychological tests"; Kathryn Tabb (2015), "Psychiatric progress and the assumption of diagnostic discrimination"	
Fri, Apr 8	The replication crisis in psychology	Uljana Feest (2019), "Why replication is overrated"	Optional paper revisions due by end of the day (23:59 PST)
<p><b>Final Exam Period:</b> Apr 14—29  Date/Time TBA</p>			