

Animal Cognition: Historical and Contemporary Views

Syllabus (v1)

Course Info

Instructor: Richard Fry, rfry@siue.edu

Meeting Time: W, 6:00-8:50PM, Peck Hall 2417

Office Hours: Monday/Wednesday 12:15-1:15PM, Peck Hall 3210

Course Description:

Are animals capable of thinking? What evidence would count in favor of—or against—ascribing to non-human animals the same cognitive capacities we ascribe to ourselves and other humans? We'll start by examining answers to these questions from the history of philosophy, particularly those from the philosophical revolution of the Early Modern period (roughly 1650-1800). Thinkers like Descartes, Locke, Leibniz and Hume all had sophisticated and quite different accounts of what non-human animals were capable of. We'll also look at figures like Montaigne, Bayle, and La Mettrie who provide key points of triangulation and dialogue with the larger intellectual world of the time. We'll then move to contemporary philosophical views, informed as they are by the cognitive science and comparative ethology of the last forty years, considering questions like: Are animals conscious? Do they have beliefs? How sophisticated is animal communication? Could animals be moral?

Course Goals:

This course has several goals:

- To use classic texts from Modern philosophy to introduce you to issues in thinking about animal cognition and further your understanding of these historical figures.
- To use contemporary philosophical work to explore issues related to current debates surrounding animal cognition.
- To improve your analytical reading and writing skills.
- To develop skills essential to academic research, particularly in philosophy.
- To develop essential life skills such as time management, communication when encountering difficulties, and thoughtful engagement with others.

Required Texts:

Montaigne, *Apology for Raymond Sebond*, tr. Grene (Hackett)
Descartes, *Selected Writings*, ed./tr. Cottingham/Soothoff (Cambridge)
Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Nidditch (Oxford)
Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Curley (Hackett)
Leibniz, *Philosophical Essays*, ed./tr. Ariew (Hackett)
Leibniz, *New Essays on Human Understanding*, ed./tr. Remnant (Cambridge)
Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Steinberg (Hackett)
Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. Norton and Norton (Oxford)
Andrews, *The Animal Mind* (Routledge)

All of these texts should be available for rental from Textbook Services.

Other course readings will be made available through Blackboard.

You are required to bring **all** readings listed for a class meeting to that class.

Policies

Academic Misconduct and Plagiarism:

- You are expected and required to uphold SIUE's standards of academic honesty in this course.
- **Plagiarism of ideas or words is unacceptable.**
- Confirmed academic dishonesty will result in automatic failure of the course.
- Familiarize yourself with what counts as plagiarism and SIUE's policies:
 - <http://www.siu.edu/lovejoylibrary/services/instruction/plagiarism.shtml>,
 - <http://www.siu.edu/policies/3c2.shtml>

Personal Conduct:

- You are responsible for arriving on time, being prepared, and comporting yourself in an appropriate manner. This means treating your classmates with respect and courtesy.
- *You are responsible for helping to foster a safe and productive learning environment.*
 - Some of the topics we will address this semester can provoke powerful emotions, so be mindful of how topics under discussion may differently impact members of the class.

Grades:

- Late work: For each 24 hours late after the due date for a piece of written work is submitted, 3% will be subtracted from whatever grade it earns.
 - All work more than a week late will receive an F.
- Extensions: If you need an extension for written work, email me with a brief description of your situation.
 - If I approve an extension, we will work out an appropriate timeframe.
 - Extensions must be requested at least 24 hours before the assignment is due.
- Grade appeals: If you believe your work deserves a different grade than it received, you may ask in writing for reconsideration.
 - Submit this request *within one week* but no sooner than *one day after* your work is returned.
 - Your written request must explain why you believe the work deserves a different grade.
 - Please note that if a change is made, the new grade may be either higher or lower.

Changes:

- I reserve the right to change any part of this syllabus at any time.
- Changes will be announced in class and a new version of the syllabus posted to Blackboard.

Assignments and Assessment

More details about these assignments will be distributed online and in class throughout the semester.

Papers (60%)

- You will have the opportunity to write two papers, one in each half of the course.
- The first paper will address content from Modern section and be 2000-3000 words.
 - I must approve the topic, so please consult with me.
- The second paper will be *either*
 - (a) a similar 2000-3000 word paper on the contemporary philosophy from the course, *or*
 - (b) with my approval, a refinement/expansion of the first paper responsive to my feedback
- The better of these two papers will count for 40% of your final grade, the worse for 20%.

Presentation (10%)

- One week you will be primarily responsible for leading discussion.
- With my help, you will prepare questions in advance to guide your classmates through the content of the week's primary reading.
- You will also be responsible for a short presentation on the 'background' and/or 'secondary' reading for that week.
- We will parcel out days for this during our second class meeting.

Article Assignment (10%)

- Each week one of you will find and distribute the secondary reading for the subsequent week.
 - This may mean locating the reading through the library, the author's web page, Google Scholar, Philosophical Underclass, sci-hub, or any number of similar resources.
- You will email this reading to your classmates *before the start of class the week before the reading will be discussed.*
- You will also give a short (2-3m) run down at the beginning of that class detailing how you located the paper.

Participation and Compartment (20%)

- This grade includes reading *and bringing* the assigned material, arriving on time, and participating in discussion. You can also participate by coming to office hours or emailing me.
- Not coming to class, sleeping, not bringing assigned readings, arriving consistently late, acting disrespectfully to me or your peers (by, e.g., having your phone out), *etc.*, will lose you points.

Extra Credit (+2%)

- Attending any session of the Early Modern—Saint Louis conference (21-22 Apr) will net you +1% to your final grade. Asking a question in a session will net you an additional +1%, for a total of a potential +2%. More info will be available at em-stl.net.

Calendar with Topics, Readings and Questions

You are expected to read the material listed before the class-day listed.

1: Introductions: What's going on here?

11 Jan - Intro to the Course - What'll we talk about? How will I be assessed?

2: Modern Perspectives

18 Jan - Beginnings: Montaigne's Analogies

Primary: Montaigne, *Apology for Raymond Seybond* (excerpt, p.15-47)

Background: Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrronism* Ch.14, §40-78 (Blackboard)

25 Jan - Discontinuity: Descartes's Two Tests

Primary: Descartes, *Discourse on Method* pt.V, AT55-60 (excerpt) (p.43-46)

Background: Descartes, *Principles of Philosophy* §1-8, 50-57, 63-67 (p.160-162, 176-179, 182-184)

01 Feb - Continuity: Hobbes's Faculties

Primary: Hobbes, *Leviathan* ch.I-VI

Secondary: Apeldoorn, 'Reconsidering Hobbes's Account of Practical Deliberation'

08 Feb - Locke: Abstraction and Comparison

Primary: Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* II.ix-xi

Secondary: Wilson, 'Animal Ideas' p.1-17 (esp. p.14-17)

Background: Locke, *Essay* II.i-viii

15 Feb - Leibniz: 'Reason'

Primary: Leibniz, *New Essays Concerning Human Understanding* II.ix-xi

Secondary: Wilson, 'Animal Ideas' p.17-18

Secondary: Gennaro, 'Leibniz on Consciousness and Self-Consciousness'

Background: Leibniz, 'Principles of Nature and Grace Based on Reason'

22 Feb - Bayle: A Skeptical Fideist Perspective

Primary: Bayle, 'Rorarius' from *Dictionary Historical and Critical*

Secondary: Des Chene, 'Animal as Category in Bayle's 'Rorarius''

01 Mar - Hume: Analogy and Relation to Skepticism

Primary: Hume, *Treatise* 1.3.16

Primary: Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* 9

Secondary: Boyle, 'Hume on Animal Reason' (p.3-18)

Background: Hume, *Enquiry* 2-5

15 Mar - La Mettrie: Medicine and Mechanism

Primary: La Mettrie, *Man/Machine* (Blackboard)

22 Mar - Kant: Cognition, Consciousness and the Unity of Apperception

Secondary: McLear, 'Kant on Animal Consciousness'

Background: Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Immanuel Kant, §2-4

Background: Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 'Kant's View of the Mind and Consciousness of Self'

Paper 1 due by 11:59PM, 26 Mar

3: Contemporary Work

29 Mar - Getting Started

Read: Andrews, Ch.1

Background: Shettleworth, 'Clever Animals and Killjoy Explanations in Comparative Psychology'

05 Apr - Scientific Constraints and Consciousness

Read: Andrews, Ch.2-3

Background: Carruthers, 'Brute Experience'

12 Apr - Thinking and Communication

Read: Andrews, Ch.4-5

Background: Davidson, 'Rational Animals'

19 Apr - Mindreading and Morals

Read: Andrews, Ch.6-7

Secondary: Boyle, 'Hume on Animal Reason' (p.18-24)

26 Apr - Wrap Up: Pizza Party and Paper Chat

No new reading

Paper 2 due by 11:59PM, 03 May

Resources

Philosophical Resources

The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <http://plato.stanford.edu>

Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <http://www.iep.utm.edu>

Philpapers.org: <http://philpapers.org>

Tips on Writing a Philosophy Paper: <http://goo.gl/iDzgFb>

Academic Resources

Disability Support Services: Student Success Center, Room 1270

<http://www.siu.edu/dss/> and disabilitysupport@siu.edu

Provides accommodations to disabled students. DSS also has services which students can use to increase skills in learning, time management, and test-taking.

Instructional Services:

<http://www.siu.edu/is/>

Provides instructional support unit for the students, faculty and staff. Helps the underprepared to prepare, the prepared to advance, and the advanced to excel.

Writing Center: in the Academic Advancement Center

<http://www.siu.edu/is/writing/>, 618-650-2045

The writing center assists you as you analyze your paper and explore ways to improve it. Our primary concern is to help you become a better writer. To do this, we challenge you to learn more about composition and the conventions of Standard English.

Health and Wellness Resources

Counseling Services: Student Success Center room 0222

<http://www.siu.edu/counseling/>

Provides individual counseling, counseling groups, healthy living workshops, consultations, and referrals. Special attention is paid to the ongoing issues affecting college students.

Student Health Clinic Services: Student Success Center room 0222

<http://www.siu.edu/healthservice/clinic/index.shtml>