

Psychology 4850A
Social Intelligence

Fall 2008
15:00-17:50, Wednesday, W870



Instructors:

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Office Hours:

By appointment

Objective:

The objective of this course is to explore several topics covering the broad area of 'social intelligence'. We'll begin by discussing what social intelligence is, and who and what should be expected to have it. We'll then go on to review and discuss data from a variety of different sources, e.g., apes, monkeys and other social mammals, food-storing, social birds (mainly the crow family), robots, children and adult humans, before finishing up with a discussion of the philosophical issues raised by a view of intelligence as inherently 'social'. There is no set direction that we will take, rather we will be led by the previous week's discussion, the issues highlighted and your own personal interests.

Structure of the Course

The course is seminar-based, and you will be expected to come to class fully prepared (i.e., having read the assigned paper for that particular week) and to participate fully in class discussions and debates. Each week, we will break into two groups, which will take opposing sides on a current area of debate with respect to the topic under discussion. For the first hour and a half, each group will attempt to formulate an argument to defend their position, and to anticipate and answer the likely arguments that the other side will make. Following a break, we'll then all reconvene for the final hour of each session, where we will debate the issue, with each side presenting their argument and answering the criticisms of the opposing side. You will also write a series of essays throughout the course (see "Evaluation" below), which will be marked for the following week after hand-in, and we will then have a group-feedback session. This will also be a forum for you to discuss and compare your essays with each other, in terms of the angle you decided to take, the arguments made and the evidence used to support your points.

Readings

There is no set text for this course. Instead, you will be given a series of readings that will form the basis for class discussions and essays. Readings will be posted on webCT. For each topic, two 'key articles' (one representing each side of the debate) will be provided, and possibly a number of supplementary readings. You are expected to read the key article for your group before class, and be prepared to discuss it. The supplementary readings are to be used at your own discretion: you can read all of them or none of them, or just those ones that you are most interested in. You are also encouraged to seek out readings on topics of interest for yourself, and we will place more emphasis on this towards the end of the course, when you have greater familiarity with the course structure and the subject area.

Course Web Sites

There are two websites. The main site can be found at <http://classes.uleth.ca/200703/psyc4850a>. The second is a webCT site (<http://webCT.uleth.ca>), where you'll find readings, upload essays and view your grades etc.

Evaluation

Your grade will be based on the marks from the essays that you will write over the course of the semester. You will write five essays in total (of a maximum 2000-2500 words each), and your mark will be based on the four best essays you write (i.e., we will drop the essay with the lowest mark). Please note: you MUST submit five essays in total in order to pass the class, even though only your four best marks will be used to calculate your grade. Each essay will be worth 25%. We expect the following as the minimum level of participation during the course: (a) coming to class having done the assigned reading (b) asking at least one question or making at least one

comment during the course of discussion/debate (c) being prepared to answer at least one question directed at you during the course of discussion/debate. Failure to meet this minimum participation level will result in an adjustment of your final grade. Your final letter grade will be calculated as shown in the table below.

A+	91-100	C+	68-70
A	86-90	C	64-67
A-	81-85	C-	61 – 63
B+	78-80	D+	55 – 60
B	74-77	D	50 – 54
B-	71-73	F	< 50

IMPORTANT DATES:

September 17 th	Hand-in deadline essay 1
October 8 th	Hand-in deadline essay 2
October 29 th	Hand-in deadline essay 3
November 12 th	Hand-in deadline essay 4
December 3 rd	Hand-in deadline essay 5

SYLLABUS

As noted above, it is difficult to provide a precise and detailed syllabus as, in effect, you will all be designing your own course as we go along. It is possible, however, to give you a flavour of some of the topics we are likely to cover, which are listed below:

What is social intelligence?

The mentality of apes

Monkey minds?

The social lives of hyenas, dolphins and other interesting mammals

Mental time travel in birds

It takes a thief to know a thief? Complex cognition in the crow family

Getting into the goo: Social cognition in human infants

Children's theory of mind? Fact, fiction or something in between

Social robots?

Non-verbal behaviour and the automatic nature of social life

Singing, dancing, laughing, talking: social bonding and social brains

Philosophical issues: Are we in error about "Descartes' error"?

What do you think social intelligence is *now*?