

# **Studies in Philosophy of Mind:**

## **Modularity and the Architecture of the Human Mind**

Philosophy 535  
Spring Term 2010 – Purdue University  
Instructors: Daniel Kelly

### **Syllabus**

#### **1. Course Description**

In one of the most cited works of philosophy of mind in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Jerry Fodor, in the words of one group of commentators, “revived a tradition of faculty psychology which he traced back, tongue only partly in cheek, to Franz Joseph Gall, the founder of phrenology.” Despite their surprising roots, the ideas Fodor sets out in *Modularity of Mind* have been enormously influential, both within philosophy proper and in its neighboring disciplines in the cognitive sciences. Perhaps the book’s most (in)famous impact has been on the research program that has become known as Evolutionary Psychology, which uses the notion of a mental module together with concepts from evolutionary theory in order to understand the structure and operation of modern human minds. The ascendancy of Evolutionary Psychology and the picture of human cognitive architecture that it offers – encapsulated in the “massive modularity hypothesis” – has prompted a number of responses from philosophers, some developing friendly amendments and working out its problems, others rejecting it outright and urging favored alternatives.

In this course, we will read a book length instance of each type of response. Roughly the first half of the course will cover the historical backdrop and conceptual foundations needed to appreciate the current state of debate. This will include a brief refresher on functionalism and how it emerged out of dissatisfactions with other materialist solutions to the mind body problem, a reading of Fodor’s *locus classicus* on modularity, and an overview of Evolutionary Psychology, its theoretical framework, and the arguments and evidence offered in favor of the massive modularity hypothesis. We will then be in a position to read, in the second half of the course, Peter Carruthers’ *The Architecture of the Mind* (2006), which defends and builds on the idea of massive modularity, and Kim Sterelny’s *Thought in a Hostile World* (2003), which begins from similar evolutionary premises, but arrives at a very different picture of human cognition, and argues that many of the most interesting and distinctive features of our minds are not modular at all.

#### **2. Class Meetings**

Class will meet Tuesday and Thursday from 10:30 – 11:45am in Room 1248 of Beering Hall.

#### **3. Office Hours and Contact Information**

Office: 7126 Beering Hall  
Office Phone: 732-932-9861 ext. 114

Email: [drkelly@purdue.edu](mailto:drkelly@purdue.edu)

Fall Term Office Hours: Wednesday, 10:00am – 12:00 pm and by appointment

#### 4. Course Requirements and Grading

Grades on papers and exams will be given on the standard 0-100 point grading scale:

100-93:	A
92-90:	A-
89-87:	B+
86-83:	B
82-80:	B-
79-77:	C+
76-73:	C
72-70:	C-
69-60:	D
59-0:	F

Final grades for graduate students will be determined by 2 papers, each roughly 10-15 pages long, and an in class presentation. They will be weighted as follows:

Two Papers	45% each (90% total)
Presentation	10%

EMAILED AND ELECTRONICALLY SUBMITTED PAPERS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED. Papers not turned in by the end of class the day they are due are LATE. For each day late, 7 points will be deducted.

#### 5. Course Policies

**Emergencies:** In the event of a major campus emergency, course requirements, deadlines and grading percentages are subject to changes that may be necessitated by a revised semester calendar or other circumstances.

**Plagiarism:** With the advent of the internet, plagiarism has become an increasingly serious problem at universities around the country, particularly in classes like this one, where papers determine a substantial part of the grade.

In order to avoid plagiarizing from a source, both direct quotations *and paraphrases or summaries* of material found in traditional print media or on the internet must be acknowledged. If you have any questions about how this definition will be interpreted, please do not hesitate to discuss the matter with me.

Plagiarism and cheating on exams undermines the integrity of the academic community. When undetected, it gives the perpetrator an unfair advantage over students who are graded on the basis of their own work. In this class we will do our best to detect plagiarism and cheating. Students who are aware of violations by others should bring this to my attention. This is the right thing to do. It is also in your own self-interest.

There will be zero tolerance for plagiarism in this course. Plagiarized papers will receive a 0, the student will automatically fail the course, and their name will be handed given to the university authorities. For more on the Purdue University policy on plagiarism, see the following website:

[http://www.purdue.edu/univregs/pages/stu\\_conduct/stu\\_regulations.html](http://www.purdue.edu/univregs/pages/stu_conduct/stu_regulations.html)

With each paper assignment, a handful of students may be selected at random to submit their papers to TurnItIn, an online service that maintains an enormous database of papers that it uses to check for instances of plagiarism.

**External Sources:** Using sources not listed on the syllabus in researching and writing your papers is fine, as long as they are both to the point, and are properly cited. And at all times, when in doubt, ***cite your sources!*** It is the best way to avoid being accused of plagiarism.

This is probably the best place to make this point, too: Wikipedia can be valuable for getting a very broad grasp of positions and debates, but when it gets into details, especially on philosophic topics, it is very often horrible – sketchy, convoluted, misinformed, and often simply wrong. If you wish to consult online resources, I suggest you use some of the other, much better sites. Most prominent is the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, but others are useful as well:

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy <http://plato.stanford.edu/>  
The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy <http://www.iep.utm.edu/>  
Episteme Links <http://www.epistemelinks.com/Main/MainEncy.aspx>

## 6. Website

Information, comments, and some readings and lecture notes will be posted on the course website, which can be reached via Professor Kelly's homepage:

<http://web.ics.purdue.edu/~drkelly/>

The course website itself can be found here:

<http://web.ics.purdue.edu/~drkelly/KellyModularityCogArchSpring2010.html>

## 7. Texts

The following four books will be required for this course:

Carruthers, P. *The Architecture of the Mind* (Oxford University Press, 2006)  
Fodor, J. *Modularity of Mind* (The MIT Press, 1983)  
Sterelny, K. *Thought in a Hostile World* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2003)

Other useful but not required resources include the following:

Barkow, J., Cosmides, L. & Tooby, J. *The Adapted Mind* (Oxford University Press, 1995)  
Fodor, J. *The Mind Doesn't Work That Way* (The MIT Press, 2001)

Supplemental readings will be posted on the course website as the semester progresses.

## 8. Topics and Readings

Here is a very tentative schedule of topics and readings. Amendments and alterations will be announced in class as we go, both in class and on the webpage. Since reminders and other information will frequently be posted on the course website, *make sure you check the website on a fairly regular basis.*

### Week 1: January 11<sup>th</sup>

- Introduction and Background
  - Lycan, 'The Mind – Body Problem'
  - Levin, 'Functionalism'

### Week 2: January 18<sup>th</sup>

- *Modularity of Mind*, Parts 1-2
  - Fodor, 1-47

### Week 3: January 25<sup>th</sup>

- *Modularity of Mind*, Part 3-5
  - Fodor, 47-129
- Recommended/Useful/Interesting for this section (all online)
  - Chomsky, N. 'A Review of B.F. Skinner's *Verbal Behavior*'
  - Cummins, R. "'How does it work?'" vs. "What are the laws?" Two conceptions of psychological explanations'
  - Dennett, D. 'Why You Can't Make a Computer That Feels Pain' (Contains the amnestic + curare example)
  - Dennett, D. 'The Logical Geography of Computational Approaches: a View from the East Pole'
  - Fodor, J. 'Precis of *The Modularity of Mind*'
  - Laurence, S. & Margolish, E. 'The Poverty of the Stimulus Argument'
  - Mason, K., Sripada, C. & Stich, S. 'The Philosophy of Psychology'
  - Miller, G. 'The Magical Number Seven, Plus or Minus Two: Some Limits on Our Capacity for Processing Information'

### Week 4: February 1<sup>st</sup>

- Evolutionary Psychology & Massive Modularity
  - Online:
    - Samuels, 'Evolutionary Psychology and the Massive Modularity Hypothesis'
    - Cosmides and Tooby, 'Evolutionary Psychology: A Primer'
    - Tooby and Cosmides, 'Evolutionary Psychology: Conceptual Foundations'
    - Griffiths, 'Ethology, Sociobiology, and Evolutionary Psychology'
  - Pinker – chapters 1 & 2 of *How the Mind Works*

### Week 5: February 8<sup>th</sup>

- *The Architecture of the Mind*, Chapters 1 & 2
  - Carruthers, 1-149

### Week 6: February 15<sup>th</sup>

- *The Architecture of the Mind*, Chapters 3 & 4
  - Carruthers, 150-276

Week 7: February 22<sup>nd</sup>

- *The Architecture of the Mind*, Chapters 5 & 6
  - Carruthers, 277-382

Week 8: March 1<sup>st</sup>

- *The Architecture of the Mind*, Chapters 7 & 8
  - Carruthers, 384-417

Week 9: March 8<sup>th</sup>

- Catch up and reading around the edges
  - Carruthers, 'Precis of *The Architecture of the Mind: Massive Modularity and the Flexibility of Thought*
  - Cowie, 'Us, Them, and It: Modules, Genes, Environments, and Evolution'
  - Machery, 'Massive Modularity and the Flexibility of Human Cognition'
  - Wilson, 'The Drink You Have When You're Not Having A Drink'
  - Carruthers, 'On Fodor-Fixation, Flexibility, and Human Uniqueness: A Reply to Cowie, Machery, and Wilson'
  - Carruthers, 'The Cognitive Functions of Language' w/ Open Peer Commentary and Author's Response
- **First Paper Due at the end of class, Thursday, March 11<sup>th</sup>**

Week 10: March 15<sup>th</sup>

- **No Class: Spring Break**

Week 11: March 22<sup>nd</sup>

- *Thought in a Hostile World: The Evolution of Human Cognition*, Chapters 1 – 3
  - Sterelny, 1 – 50

Week 12: March 29<sup>th</sup>

- *Thought in a Hostile World: The Evolution of Human Cognition*, Chapters 4 – 5
  - Sterelny, 51 – 96

Week 13: April 5<sup>th</sup>

- *Thought in a Hostile World: The Evolution of Human Cognition* Chapters 6 – 7
  - Sterelny, 97 – 145

Week 14: April 12<sup>th</sup>

- *Thought in a Hostile World: The Evolution of Human Cognition* Chapters 8 – 9
  - Sterelny, 146 – 174

Week 15: April 19<sup>th</sup>

- *Thought in a Hostile World: The Evolution of Human Cognition* Chapters 10 – 11
  - Sterelny, 175 – 240

Week 16: April 26<sup>st</sup>

- Catch up and reading around the edges
  - Papineau, 'Friendly Thoughts on the Evolution of Cognition'
  - Stich, 'Some Questions from the Not-So-Hostile World'
  - Sterelny, 'Reply to Papineau and Stich'
  - Sterelny, *The Fate of the Third Chimpanzee*
    - Jean-Nicod Lectures 2008
    - [http://www.institutnicod.org/lectures2008\\_outline.htm](http://www.institutnicod.org/lectures2008_outline.htm)
- **Second Paper Due Friday May 7<sup>th</sup>**