

Special Topics Course
4414F/9760A
Cognitive Dimensions of Politicsⁱ
Department of Political Science
The University of Western Ontario
Fall 2011

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Office hours:
Tuesdays 2-4 p.m.

“You, your joys and your sorrows, your memories and your ambitions, your sense of personal identity and free will, are in fact no more than the behavior of a vast assembly of nerve cells and their associated molecules.... No longer need one spend time...[enduring] the tedium of philosophers perpetually disagreeing with each other. Consciousness is now largely a scientific problem.”

Francis Crick

“The brain –that particular body organ—is certainly critical to understanding how we work.... But if we want to understand how the brain contributes to consciousness, we need to look at the brain’s job in relation to the larger nonbrain body and the environment in which we find ourselves. I urge that it is a body –and world—involving conception of ourselves that the new best science as well as philosophy should lead us to endorse.”

Alva Noë

“What our embodied brains are doing below the level of consciousness affects our morality and our politics –as well as just about every aspect of our social and personal lives—in ways we are all too often not aware of. Deft politicians (as well as savvy marketers) take advantage of our ignorance of our own minds to appeal to the subconscious level. Meanwhile, honest and ethical political leaders, journalists, and social activists, usually unaware of the hidden workings of the mind, fail to use what is known about the mind in the service of morality and truth.”

George Lakoff

Rationale and objectives

Over the past three decades, cognitive science –the interdisciplinary study of mind and intelligence– has radically improved our understanding of the way in which we perceive, represent and understand reality. The knowledge generated by this relatively new field of science can no longer be ignored by political science. After all, as Mark Turner points out, social science is a mental activity that deals with human actions conditioned by individual and collective mental processes.

Social science in general, and political science in particular, must critically acknowledge and confront the impact that cognitive science is having on many of the fundamental ontological and epistemological premises that have shaped our discipline’s intellectual history. It is difficult, if not impossible, to talk today about the nature of political reality, perception, representation, concept formation, recognition, causality, objectivity, ethnocentrism, and language, without taking into consideration what cognitive science is saying about these topics.

This course has been designed as a first point of contact between students of political science and cognitive science. Its objective is to *introduce* students to key ideas in cognitive science that have a bearing on the ways in which we study and explain political phenomena. In this sense, the course does not require any academic background on any of the disciplines that integrate cognitive science.

Content and Organization

The course will be predominantly based on academic literature and video presentations that explicitly bridge cognitive and social science and that use the language of political and social science to explore the contributions of cognitive science. It will be divided into five sections. Each of these sections will explore a set of topics in which political science and cognitive sciences converge.

- I. Introduction
- II. Political Reality and the Self (Where do you –the political scientist— end and where does the rest of the world begin?)ⁱⁱ
- III. Reason, Knowledge and Representation (Is knowledge organized ignorance in the same way as music is organized noise?)
- IV. Emotion, Empathy and Recognition (Can Mr. Spock ever become a good political scientist?)
- V. Conclusions

The first week of each of the three substantive sections (II, III and IV) of the course, will be used to examine dominant positions regarding key topics and problems in political science/social science. The second week will examine key contributions made by cognitive science regarding the same topics. The third week will be used to examine the convergences, tensions and contradictions between cognitive and political science. The following case studies will be used to explore the relationship between cognitive science and political science in the third week of sections II, III, and IV of the course:

Section II: Political Reality and the Self: The Return of Quetzalcoatl: The re-construction of reality and the Self after the Conquest of America in 1492.

Section III: Reason, Knowledge and Representation: The Liberation of Dissonance in Music, Painting and the Human Sciences.

Section IV: Emotion, Empathy and Recognition: The Contribution of Visual Perspective to Our Intuitive Understanding of the Holocaust.

Prerequisites: Political Science 2237 or 2245

Student Assessment

The overall grade for the course will be determined as follows:

Participation.....	20%
Essay.....	50%
Comparative Book Review.....	30%

Participation

Students in this course will be expected to master the assigned readings and to actively participate in the discussions that will take place every week. Moreover, students will be required to post a critical assessment of the assigned readings on the *Cognitive Dimensions of Politics Bulletin Board* that will be created for this purpose. Critical assessments must be posted each week by Monday at noon. One or two students will formally introduce the assigned readings each week having read the other students' critical comments on the bulletin board.

Essay

A research essay (15-17) double-spaced page will be due on November 30, 2011 **IN CLASS**. The instructor will provide guidelines for this assignment.

Comparative Book Review:

Students will critically assess and compare the central premises, arguments and conclusions of the following two books:

Francis, Crick, The Astonishing Hypothesis: The Scientific Search for the Soul. New York: Touchstone, 1995.

Alva Noë, Out of Our Heads: Why You Are Not Your Brain, and Other Lessons from the Biology of Consciousness. New York: Hill and Wang, 2010.

The book review is due on October 12, 2011. **IN CLASS**. The review should not exceed 8 double-spaced pages. The instructor will provide guidelines for this assignment.

Note: A penalty of 5% per day (including week-ends and holidays) will be imposed on any written assignment that is not handed in on time, **IN CLASS**.

Books Recommended for Purchase:

Susan Blackmore, Consciousness: A Very Short Introduction. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

George Lakoff, The Political Mind: A Cognitive Scientist's Guide to your Brain and its Politics. New York: Penguin, 2009.

Alva Noë, Out of Our Heads: Why You Are Not Your Brain, and Other Lessons from the Biology of Consciousness. New York: Hill and Wang, 2010.

Movies Recommended: Consult the *Cognitive Science Movie Index*:
<https://www.indiana.edu/~cogfilms/>

READING MATERIAL

I. INTRODUCTION

September 14: Objectives and Organization of the Course

September 21: Politics and Your Brain

Lynn Nadel and Massimo Piattelli-Palmarini, "What is Cognitive Science?"
Encyclopedia of Cognitive Science, 2005.

<http://dingo.sbs.arizona.edu/~massimo/publications/PDF/LN&MPPIntro.pdf>

George Lakoff, The Political Mind: A Cognitive Scientist's Guide to your Brain and its Politics. New York: Penguin, 2009, 1-110.

Recommended:

Britannica, The Britannica Guide to the Brain: A Guided Tour of the Brain –Mind, Memory, and Intelligence. London: Robinson, 2008, 3-72.

September 28: Political Science: The Absent Brain?

Emily Hauptmann, "Political Science/Political Theory: Defining 'Theory' in Postwar Political Science", in George Steinmetz (ed.), The Politics of Method in the Human Sciences. Durham/London: Duke University Press, 2005, 207-232.

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenges to Western Thought. New York: Basic Books, 1999, 3-44.

George Lakoff, "Philosophy in the Flesh", in John Brockman, The Mind. New York: Harper Perennial, 2011, 11-30.

Recommended:

George Steinmetz, "Positivism and the Others in the Social Sciences", in George Steinmetz (ed.), The Politics of Method in the Human Sciences. Durham/London: Duke University Press, 2005, 1-56.

John G. Gunnell, "Are we Loosing Our Minds? Cognitive Science and the Study of Politics", Political Theory, 35, 2007, 704-731.

Maxwell Bennett et al., Neuroscience and Philosophy: Brain, Mind and Language. New York: Columbia University Press, 2007.

II. POLITICAL REALITY AND THE SELF

October 5: Reality and the Self in Political Science

Greg Eghigian, Andreas Killen and Christine Leuenberger, “The Self as Project: Politics and the Human Sciences”, Osiris, Vol. 22, 2007, 1-25.

Susan Blackmore, Consciousness: A Very Short Introduction. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, 1-81.

Diana Meyers, "Feminist Perspectives on the Self", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2010 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2010/entries/feminism-self/>.

Recommended:

Charles Taylor, Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, 3-110.

Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, Objectivity. New York: Zone Books, 2010, 17-54.

Sophia Mihic, Stephen G. Engelmann, and Elizabeth Rose Wingrove, “Making Sense In and Of Political Science” in George Steinmetz, ed., The Politics of Method in the Human Sciences. Durham/London: Duke University Press, 2005, 470-495.

October 12: Reality and the Self in Cognitive Science: You Are Your Brain/You Are More Than Your Brain

Joseph LeDoux, Synaptic Self: How Our Brains Become Who We Are. London: Penguin, 2002, 1-64.

V. S. Ramachandran, “The Neurology of Self-Awareness”, in John Brockman, The Mind. New York: Harper Perennial, 2011, 147-152.

Mark Rowlands, The New Science of the Mind: From Extended Mind to Embodied Phenomenology. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2010, 1-84.

Recommended:

Thomas Metzinger, The Ego Tunnel: The Science of the Mind and the Myth of the Self. New York: Basic Books, 2010.

Raymond Tallis, Aping Mankind: Neuromania, Darwinitis and the Misrepresentation of Humanity. Durham: Acumen, 2011.

October 19: Reality and the Self: Points of Encounter between Cognitive Science and Social Science.

Case Study: The Re-construction of Reality and the Self after the Conquest of America in 1492.

Peter Mason, Deconstructing America: Representations of the Other. New York: Routledge, 1990, 1-40.

Bloch, Maurice (2010) "Reconciling social science and cognitive science notions of the 'self'". LSE Research Online.

[http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/29447/1/Reconciling_Social_Science_and_Cognitive_\(LSERO\).pdf](http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/29447/1/Reconciling_Social_Science_and_Cognitive_(LSERO).pdf)

After-class movie: *The Other Conquest* (2000). Director: Salvador Carrasco. This is a film about 1520s Mexico in the aftermath of the Spanish Conquest from the vantage point of the Aztec people.

III. REASON, KNOWLEDGE AND REPRESENTATION

October 26: Epistemological Foundations of Political Science

Glanzberg, Michael, "Truth", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2009 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2009/entries/truth/>.

David Marsh and Paul Furlong, "A Skin not a Sweater: Ontology and Epistemology in Political Science", in Gerry Stoker, Theory and Methods in Political Science. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, 17-44.

Phyllis Rooney, "The Marginalization of Feminist Epistemology and What That Reveals About Epistemology 'Proper'", in Heidi E. Grasswick, ed., Feminist Epistemology and Philosophy of Science: Power in Knowledge. New York: Springer, 2011, 3-24.

Recommended:

Charles Taylor, "Interpretation and the Sciences of Man" in Philosophical Papers: Philosophy and the Human Sciences. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, 15-57.

Clifford Geertz, "The Strange Estrangement: Taylor and the Natural Sciences", in James Tully ed., Philosophy in an Age of Pluralism. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, 83-95.

Charles Taylor, “Natural and Human Sciences”, Reply to Clifford Geertz, in James Tully ed., Philosophy in an Age of Pluralism. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, 233-236.

Ronald N. Giere, Scientific Perspectivism. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2006, 1-40.

November 2: Political Cognition: Contributions from Cognitive Science

Jean-Pierre Changeux, The Physiology of Truth: Neuroscience and Human Knowledge. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2009, 1-70.

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, Metaphors We Live By. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003, 3-51.

Matthew D. Lieberman and Darren Schreiber, “Is Political Cognition Like Riding a Bicycle? How Cognitive Neuroscience Can Inform Research on Political Thinking”, *Political Psychology*, Vol. 24, No. 4, 2003, 681-704.

Recommended:

Stephen P. Turner, “Social Theory after Cognitive Science” in Brains/Practices/Relativism. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002, 1-22.

November 9: The Nature of Knowledge: Points of Encounter Between Cognitive Science and Social Science.

Case Study: The Liberation of Dissonance in Music, Painting and the Human Sciences.

Jean-Pierre Changeux and Paul Ricoeur, What Makes Us Think?: A Neuroscientist and a Philosopher Argue about Ethics, Human Nature, and the Brain. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002, 3-70.

Thomas Harrison, 1911: The Emancipation of Dissonance. California: University of California Press, 1996, 18-84.

Jonah Lehrer, “Igor Stravinsky: The Source of Music”, in Proust was a Neuroscientist. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2007, 120-143.

Picasso: The Reordering of Reality

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OqKap69JySI>

After-class movie: *Coco Chanel & Igor Stravinsky*. Director: Jan Kounen. Paris 1913. From the official description of the movie: “Igor Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* is about

to be performed. The revolutionary dissonances of Igor's work parallel Coco's radical ideas. She wants to democratize women's fashion; he wants to redefine musical taste. Coco attends the scandalous first performance of *The Rite* in a chic white dress. The music and ballet are criticized as too modern, too foreign.”

IV. EMOTION, EMPATHY AND RECOGNITION

November 16: Dealing with the Other: Justice and Morality in Political Science

Robert W. Glover, “Of Virtues and Values: Sympathy, Empathy, and Agonistic Respect in Recent Democratic Theory”. Paper delivered at the 2011 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association.

http://umaine.academia.edu/RobertGlover/Papers/745611/Of_Virtues_and_Values_Sympathy_Empathy_and_Agonistic_Respect_in_Recent_Democratic_Theory

Julie Connolly, Michael Leach and Lucas Walsh, eds., Recognition in Politics: Theory, Policy and Practice. Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007, 1-15

Charles Taylor, “The Politics of Recognition,” in Amy Gutmann, Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994, 25-74.

Matthew Ericson, “Seeing Justice, Recognition and Identity in Abu Ghraib”, in Julie Connolly, Michael Leach and Lucas Walsh, eds., Recognition in Politics: Theory, Policy and Practice. Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007, 136-154.

Recommended:

Nancy Fraser, “Reframing Justice in a Globalizing World”, in Julie Connolly, Michael Leach and Lucas Walsh, eds., Recognition in Politics: Theory, Policy and Practice. Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007, 16-36.

Tom Campbell, Justice. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

November 23: Justice, Morality and the Emotional Brain

Patricia S. Churchland, Braintrust: What Neuroscience Tells Us about Morality. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2011, 1-62.

Joseph Ledoux, The Emotional Brain: The Mysterious Underpinnings of Emotional Life. New York: Touchstone, 2000, 11-72.

Recommended:

John O’Manique, The Origins of Justice: The Evolution of Morality, Human Rights and

Law. Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003.

November 30: Emotion, Empathy and Recognition: Points of Encounter Between Cognitive Science and Social Science

Case Study: The Contribution of Visual Perspective to Our Intuitive Understanding of the Holocaust.

Sheldon J. Chow, "What Cognitive Science Can Offer Social Science: Lessons from Practical Ethics." Paper delivered at the conference *Cognitive Social Sciences: Grounding the Social Sciences in the Cognitive Sciences*, August 11, 2010

http://publish.uwo.ca/~schow53/index_files/Page320.htm

Rose McDermott, "The Feeling of Rationality: The Meaning of Neuroscientific Advances for Political Science", Perspectives on Politics, December 2004, Vol. 2, No. 4, 691-706.

Wartenberg, Thomas, "Philosophy of Film", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Winter 2008 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2008/entries/film/>.

Documentary: Imaginary Witness: Hollywood and the Holocaust (2004). Koch Lorber Films.

Recommended:

Gregory Currie, Image and Mind: Film, Philosophy and Cognitive Science. Cambridge University Press, 1995.

After-class movie: *Schindler's List* (1993). Directed by Steven Spielberg. Plot summary by Rob Hartill: "The true story of Czech born Oskar Schindler, a businessman who tried to make his fortune during the Second World War by exploiting cheap Jewish labour, but ended up penniless having saved over 1000 Polish Jews from almost certain death during the holocaust".

December 7: Conclusions

Lewis Carroll, The Mad Gardeners's Song,
<http://writersalmanac.publicradio.org/index.php?date=2002/02/04>

ⁱ The title of this course is a variation of the title of Mark Turner's Cognitive Dimensions of Social Science. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

ⁱⁱ This question is a variation of the question raised by Alva Noë in Out of Our Heads: Why You Are Not Your Brain, and Other Lessons from the Biology of Consciousness. New York: Hill and Wang, 2009, 67.

**APPENDIX TO UNDERGRADUATE COURSE OUTLINES
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE**

Prerequisite checking - the student's responsibility

"Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites."

Essay course requirements

With the exception of 1000-level courses, most courses in the Department of Political Science are essay courses. Total written assignments (excluding examinations) will be at least 3,000 words in Politics 1020E, at least 5,000 words in a full course numbered 2000 or above, and at least 2,500 words in a half course numbered 2000 or above.

Use of Personal Response Systems ("Clickers")

"Personal Response Systems ("clickers") may be used in some classes. If clickers are to be used in a class, it is the responsibility of the student to ensure that the device is activated and functional. Students must see their instructor if they have any concerns about whether the clicker is malfunctioning.

Students must use only their own clicker. If clicker records are used to compute a portion of the course grade:

- the use of somebody else's clicker in class constitutes a scholastic offence,
- the possession of a clicker belonging to another student will be interpreted as an attempt to commit a scholastic offence."

Security and Confidentiality of Student Work (refer to current *Western Academic Calendar* (<http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/>))

"**Submitting or Returning Student Assignments, Tests and Exams** - All student assignments, tests and exams will be handled in a secure and confidential manner. Particularly in this respect, leaving student work unattended in public areas for pickup is not permitted."

Duplication of work

Undergraduate students who submit similar assignments on closely related topics in two different courses must obtain the consent of both instructors prior to the submission of the assignment. If prior approval is not obtained, each instructor reserves the right not to accept the assignment.

Grade adjustments

In order to ensure that comparable standards are applied in political science courses, the Department may require instructors to adjust final marks to conform to Departmental guidelines.

Academic Offences

"Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

<http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholoff.pdf>."

Submission of Course Requirements

ESSAYS, ASSIGNMENTS, TAKE-HOME EXAMS **MUST** BE SUBMITTED ACCORDING TO PROCEDURES SPECIFIED BY YOUR INSTRUCTOR (I.E., IN CLASS, DURING OFFICE HOURS, TA'S OFFICE HOURS) OR UNDER THE INSTRUCTOR'S OFFICE DOOR.

THE MAIN OFFICE DOES NOT DATE-STAMP OR ACCEPT ANY OF THE ABOVE.

Note: Information excerpted and quoted above are Senate regulations from the Handbook of Scholarship and Academic Policy. <http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/>

Students registered in Social Science should refer to <http://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/> <http://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/havingproblems.asp> for information on Medical Policy, Term Tests, Final Examinations, Late Assignments, Short Absences, Extended Absences, Documentation and other Academic Concerns. Non-Social Science students should refer to their home faculty's academic counselling office.

Plagiarism

"Plagiarism: Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence." (see Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar).

Plagiarism Checking: "All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>)."

Multiple-choice tests/exams: "Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating."

Note: Information excerpted and quoted above are Senate regulations from the Handbook of Scholarship and Academic Policy. <http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/>

PLAGIARISM*

In writing scholarly papers, you must keep firmly in mind the need to avoid plagiarism. Plagiarism is the unacknowledged borrowing of another writer's words or ideas. Different forms of writing require different types of acknowledgement. The following rules pertain to the acknowledgements necessary in academic papers.

A. In using another writer's words, you must both place the words in quotation marks and acknowledge that the words are those of another writer.

You are plagiarizing if you use a sequence of words, a sentence or a paragraph taken from other writers without acknowledging them to be theirs. Acknowledgement is indicated either by (1) mentioning the author and work from which the words are borrowed in the text of your paper; or by (2) placing a footnote number at the end of the quotation in your text, and including a correspondingly numbered footnote at the bottom of the page (or in a separate reference section at the end of your essay). This footnote should indicate author, title of the work, place and date of publication, and page number.

Method (2) given above is usually preferable for academic essays because it provides the reader with more information about your sources and leaves your text uncluttered with parenthetical and tangential references. In either case words taken from another author must be enclosed in quotation marks or set off from your text by single spacing and indentation in such a way that they cannot be mistaken for your own words. Note that you cannot avoid indicating quotation simply by changing a word or phrase in a sentence or paragraph which is not your own.

B. In adopting other writers' ideas, you must acknowledge that they are theirs.

You are plagiarizing if you adopt, summarize, or paraphrase other writers' trains of argument, ideas or sequences of ideas without acknowledging their authorship according to the method of acknowledgement given in 'A' above. Since the words are your own, they need not be enclosed in quotation marks. Be certain, however, that the words you use are entirely your own; where you must use words or phrases from your source, these should be enclosed in quotation marks, as in 'A' above.

Clearly, it is possible for you to formulate arguments or ideas independently of another writer who has expounded the same ideas, and whom you have not read. Where you got your ideas is the important consideration here. Do not be afraid to present an argument or idea without acknowledgement to another writer, if you have arrived at it entirely independently. Acknowledge it if you have derived it from a source outside your own thinking on the subject.

In short, use of acknowledgements and, when necessary, quotation marks is necessary to distinguish clearly between what is yours and what is not. Since the rules have been explained to you, if you fail to make this distinction your instructor very likely will do so for you, and they will be forced to regard your omission as intentional literary theft. Plagiarism is a serious offence which may result in a student's receiving an 'F' in a course or, in extreme cases in their suspension from the University.

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Adopted by the council of the Faculty of Social Science, October, 1970; approved by the Dept. of History August 13, 1991

Accessibility at Western

Please contact poliscie@uwo.ca if you require any information in plain text format, or if any other accommodation can make the course material and/or physical space accessible to you.