“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

**Important Notice Re: Prerequisites/Antirequisites**

Please Note: You are responsible for ensuring that you have successfully completed all course prerequisites, and that you have not taken an antirequisite course. Lack of prerequisites may not be used as a basis for an appeal. If you are found to be ineligible for a course, you may be removed from it at any time and you will receive no adjustment to your fees. This decision cannot be appealed. If you find that you do not have the course prerequisites, it is in your best interest to drop the course well before the end of the add/drop period. Your prompt attention to this matter will not only help protect your academic record, but will ensure that spaces become available for students who require the course in question for graduation.

Office of the Dean, Faculty of Social Science
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 ideas and arguments 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 and debates 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 interconnected sections:

I. Introduction: Brain/Mind (two weeks).

II. The debate about mental representations and its implications for Political Science (three weeks).

III. The debate about the extended mind and its implications for the study and understanding of social and political order/social and political institutions (three weeks).

IV. The debate about self/other consciousness and its implications for the study and understanding of morality and justice (three weeks).

V. Conclusions: Political Science and Cognitive Sciences (one week).

Prerequisites:

Political Science 2237 or 2245
Student Assessment

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

- Participation.........................................................20%
- Essay........................................................................50%
- Book Review/s.........................................................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. Additional guidelines for these presentations will be provided by the instructor in class.

Essay

A research essay (15-17) double-spaced page will be due on November 27, 2013 IN CLASS. Guidelines for this assignment will be provided by the instructor in class.

Book Review/s:

Undergraduate students will review one of the following books:


The book review (undergraduates) is due on October 16, 2013, IN CLASS.

Graduate students will review two of the following books:


The first book review (graduates) is due on October 16, 2013, **IN CLASS**.
The second book review (graduates) is due on December 4, 2013, **IN CLASS**.

The reviews (undergraduates and graduates) should not exceed 8 double-spaced pages. Guidelines for this assignment will be provided by the instructor in class.

**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:**


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

**Support Services**

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western http://www.uwo.ca/uwcom/mentalhealth/ for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.
READING MATERIAL

I. INTRODUCTION

September 11: Introduction to the course: Brain/Mind

September 18: Political Science: The absent brain?


II. The debate about mental representations and its implications for Political Science

September 25: The Embodied Brain/Mind


October 2: Brain/Mind: Evolutionary Arguments


October 9: Mental Representations


October 16: Presentation of Book Reviews

III. The debate about the extended mind and its implications for the study and understanding of social and political order/social and political institutions

October 23: Brain/Mind and Culture


October 30: The Scaffolded Mind: Institutions as Cognitive Tools


November 6: Global cultures? Global Mind/Brains?


IV. The debate about self/other consciousness and its implications for the study and understanding of morality and justice.

November 13: Self/Other Consciousness


November 20: Emotions, Empathy and Recognition


November 27: *Justice, Morality and the Emotional Brain*


**V. Conclusions**

December 4: *The Social and Neurobiological Construction of Reality*


(Graduate) Statement of 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/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf