CIEE Prague, Czech Republic

Course title: Theory of Mind: Psychology of Social Insights
Course code: PSYC 3008 PRAG
Programs offering course: Central European Studies, Communication, New Media, and Journalism
Language of instruction: English
U.S. semester credits: 3
Contact hours: 45
Term: Spring 2020

Course Description

The course will examine the psychological construct of the Theory of Mind. It will primarily focus on the construction of one’s thinking, including remembering, problem solving, and decision-making, from early childhood via adolescence through adulthood. Students will learn about the developmental stages of the Theory-of-Mind (ToM) acquisition, including social perception, thinking and reflection, construction of critical thought and about the current theories of the ToM acquisition. As the development of ToM lies inherently in an interaction between genetic and learned factors, the effect of social, communal and cultural influences will frequently resurface.

Learning Objectives

By completing this course, students will:

• will demonstrate their insights into what constitutes one’s understanding of the social world around us;
• will acquire a basis for critical thinking and learn to form new perspectives to approach the problematic through informal environment facilitating the share of views and ideas;
• will develop reading-comprehension skills adequate for scholarly literature in the field through reading texts representing different research approaches and methodologies, and an ability to engage in an academic dialogue.

Course Prerequisites
Although there are no prerequisites to the course, background in developmental science, psychology, linguistics, or language acquisition would be definite assets.

Methods of Instruction

The course will consist of informal lectures and seminars. The seminars will involve class debates, presentations and workshops on selected topics. At least one guest teacher will be invited to class to lecture on either of the following areas: phylogeny of ToM, ToM in current philosophical thought, practical aspects of ToM in atypical development, etc.

Field Trips:

- A trip to the Prague ZOO to elaborate on the presence of socio-cognitive skills in non-human primates, date TBC
- The Invisible Exhibit to experience life and behavior in settings devoid of visual stimuli, date TBC

Guest Speakers:

- Stanislav Lhota, PhD, primatologist at the Prague ZOO, date TBC

Assessment and Final Grade

1. Five reflection papers, 5x4% 20%
2. Two unannounced quizzes 2x5% 10%
3. Individual Class Presentation 20%
4. Peer reviews of 4 presentations, 4x2% 8%
5. Self-reflective evaluation of own presentation 2%
6. Final Academic Paper 20%
7. Class Participation 20%

TOTAL 100%

Course Requirements

Five reflection papers, 5x4%

A total of five reflection entries will be required from each student, each 500-words long. The papers should reflect on the course topics, readings, discussions, etc.
pertaining to the content of the class and should examine a theme beyond the reading and/or class discussion. The choice of the readings or themes is up to each student, although the instructor is ready to consult the topics with students. Intellectual queries are welcome but a reflection based on one’s own application of the knowledge gained on to one’s personal experience will suffice.

Two unannounced quizzes 2x5%

Two unannounced short quizzes will test the students’ competence on concepts and constructs operationalized in class and on the course readings.

Individual Class Presentation

Each student is required to present and lead a discussion on one of the course themes of their own choice relating to the topic of the course and the students’ interests. Upon an agreement with the instructor, the student will present their topic to the class for about 20-30 minutes long. It will be followed by a discussion lead by the presenting student. The presentation itself is worth 20% of the final grade.

Peer reviews of 4 presentations, 4x2%

Students are required to review four different presentations of their choice and write a constructive criticism to help their peer to reflect on the delivery of their presentation. To get a full score, the review should include both the positive aspects of the presentation, as well as suggest avenues for improvement of concrete facets of the presentation.

Self-reflective evaluation of own presentation

Upon the receipt of peer reviews and the instructor’s comments on the class presentation, the students are required to reflect constructively on their presentation and elaborate on the potential avenues for its improvement.

Final Academic Paper

The final course work consists of writing a research paper in which an analysis of the constituent parts and their subsequent synthesis will be assessed. One of three
topics suggested by the instructor will be graded as to whether the thesis of the paper is well defended and counterarguments are dealt with equally (Grade A), whether the thesis is supported sufficiently (Grade B), whether the thesis is clearly constructed without sufficient arguments presented for either the arguments or counter-arguments to the thesis (Grade C), or whether the paper only marginally touches on the theme of the course and at least some part of an argument is present (Grade D). A total of 2000 words with an adequate list of scholarly references will be required.

Class Participation

Class participation will be evaluated four times per semester and will take into account the students’ familiarity with the course readings and the willingness to either spur or join a class debate on the particular class topic. As well, Canvas discussions will allow for a further engagement in virtual space to elaborate on the topics raised in class or reflection papers.

CIEE Prague Class Participation Policy

Assessment of students’ participation in class is an inherent component of the course grade. Participation is valued as meaningful contribution in the digital and tangible classroom, utilizing the resources and materials presented to students as part of the course. Students are required to actively, meaningfully and thoughtfully contribute to class discussions and all types of in-class activities throughout the duration of the class. Meaningful contribution requires students to be prepared, as directed, in advance of each class session. This includes valued or informed engagement in, for example, small group discussions, online discussion boards, peer-to-peer feedback (after presentations), interaction with guest speakers, and attentiveness on co-curricular and outside-of-classroom activities.

Students are responsible for following the course content and are expected to ask clarification questions if they cannot follow the instructor’s or other students’ line of thought or argumentation.

The use of electronic devices is only allowed for computer-based in-class tests, assignments and other tasks specifically assigned by the course instructor. Students are expected to take notes by hand unless the student is entitled to the use of
computer due to his/her academic accommodations. In such cases the student is
required to submit an official letter issued by his/her home institution specifying the
extent of academic accommodations.

Class participation also includes students’ active participation in Canvas discussions
and other additional tasks related to the course content as specified by the
instructor.

Students will receive a partial participation grade every three weeks.

Attendance

Regular class attendance is required throughout the program, and all absences will
result in a lower participation grade for any affected CIEE course. Due to the intensive
schedules for short-term programs, absences that constitute more than 10% of the
total course will result in a written warning.

Students who transfer from one CIEE class to another during the add/drop period will
not be considered absent from the first session(s) of their new class, provided they
were marked present for the first session(s) of their original class. Otherwise, the
absence(s) from the original class carry over to the new class and count against the
grade in that class.

For CIEE classes, excessively tardy (over 15 minutes late) students must be marked
absent. Attendance policies also apply to any required co-curricular class excursion or
event, as well as to Internship, Service Learning, or required field placement. Students
who miss class for personal travel, including unforeseen delays that arise as a result
of personal travel, will be marked as absent. No make-up or re-sit opportunity will be
provided.

Attendance policies also apply to any required class excursion, with the exception that
some class excursions cannot accommodate any tardiness, and students risk being
marked as absent if they fail to be present at the appointed time.

Absences will lead to the following penalties:
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of Total Course Hours Missed</th>
<th>Minimum Penalty</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Up to 10%</td>
<td>Participation graded as per class requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 – 20%</td>
<td>Participation graded as per class requirements; grade penalty &amp; <strong>written warning</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 20%</td>
<td>Automatic <strong>course failure</strong>, and possible expulsion</td>
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N.B. Course schedule is subject to change due to study tours, excursions, or local holidays. Final schedules will be included in the final syllabus provided to students on site.

**Weekly Schedule**

**Week 1**

Class 1.1  Course introduction

Course content, course requirements, grading and syllabus overview

Class 1.2  Course introduction

Key concepts defined, presentation sign-up

Reading:


**Week 2**

Class 2.1  Psychological basis of ToM research
Research methodologies and terminology overview

Reading:

Pillai et al. 2012.

Class 2.2 Developmental milestones

Empirical research

Reading:

Wellman & Liu 2004, 523–541.

Week 3
Class 3.1 Infancy

Early precursors of ToM abilities

Reading:

Brooks & Meltzoff 2015, 67-78.

Class 3.2 Infancy

Early precursors of ToM abilities cont.

Class presentation(s)

Journal entry 1 due on Thursday.

Week 4
Class 4.1 Origins of ToM abilities

Reading:

Meltzoff 2011, 49-75.
Class 4.2

Class presentation(s)

Peer-review 1 due

Week 5

Class 5.1  Preschool and School Years

Early school years

Reading:


Class 5.2  Later School Years

Class presentation(s)

Reading:


Journal entry 2 due on Thursday.

Week 6

Class 6.1  Role of language in ToM acquisition

Early linguistic competence and ToM

Readings:


Class 6.2  Pragmatic competence and ToM

Class presentation(s)
Readings:


Journal entry 3 due on Thursday

Week 7

Class 7.1 Role of executive functions in ToM acquisition

Theories of ToM development

Reading:

Carlson et al. 2015, 186-197.

Class 7.2 Brain regions involved in ToM processing

Class presentation(s)

Reading:

Zelazo, Muller 2011, 574-603.

Peer-review 2 due on Thursday.

Week 8

Class 8.1 Adolescence

Reading:

Dumontheil et al. 2010, 331-338.

Class 8.2 Critical Thinking and Writing

Class presentation(s)

Reading:

Hughes et al. 2015, 149-153.
Journal entry 4 due on Thursday.

Week 9

Class 9.1 Adulthood

ToM and aging

Reading:


Class 9.2 In-class film viewing

Peer-review 3 due on Thursday

Week 10

Class 10.0 Social insight in atypical development

Autism, SLI

Reading:

Peterson et al. 2012, 469-485.

Journal entry 5 due on Thursday.

Week 11

Class 11.1 Social insight in atypical development, continued

Deafness and Blindness

Reading:

Filippová, Hudáková, 2016, 85-103.

Class 11.2 Field trip to the Invisible Exhibit
Peer-review 3 due on Thursday

Week 12
Class 12.1 Non-human social reasoning

Reading:
MacLeod, 2017, 6348-6354.

Class 12.2 Evolutionary perspective on collaboration and cooperation

Field trip to the Prague ZOO with a possible guest primatologist on site.

Reading: TBA

Peer-review 4 due on Thursday

Final research paper due by midnight of Sunday.

Week 13
Class 13.1 Final Exam Week

Self-reflective evaluation of one own’s presentation due on Wednesday.

Class 13.2 Final Exam Week

Final thoughts, contextualisation of knowledge and course wrap-up

Course Materials
Readings


Further scholarly literature