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: 3.00
Contact hours: 45.00
Term: Spring 2021

Course Description

The course examines the psychological construct of the Theory of Mind. It primarily focuses on the construction of one’s thinking about their social world, from early childhood via adolescence through adulthood. Students learn about the developmental stages of the Theory-of-Mind (ToM) acquisition, the influences of language and executive functions on its development during ontogeny, and about the current theories of the ToM development. As ToM inherently reflects an interaction between genetic and environmental factors, the effect of social and communal cultural impact frequently resurfaces.

Learning Objectives

By completing this course, students will:

- demonstrate and defend their insights into what constitutes one’s understanding of the social world around us;
- acquire a basis for critical thinking and learn to form new perspectives on the material discussed;
- critically reflect on their own experiences and their peers’ contributions employing relevant course concepts;
- develop reading-comprehension skills adequate for scholarly literature in the field 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%
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.

If you will miss a class for any reason, notify the Program Coordinator and your instructor beforehand via Canvas. You are responsible for any materials covered in class during your absence, and except in the specific cases listed below, credit will not be granted for missed assessments.

Excessive absences will result in a notification letter, and finally a warning letter, sent to you and your home school, based on the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of course hours missed</th>
<th>Number of CIEE classes</th>
<th>Minimum penalty</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Up to 10%</td>
<td>One to Three 90-min. classes; or One 180-min. class</td>
<td>No penalty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10% - 20%</td>
<td>Four 90-min. classes</td>
<td>Written notification* to the student, followed by a warning letter to the student and home school; 3% reduction in the final grade</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Five 90-min. classes</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Two 180-min classes</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 20%</td>
<td>Six 90-min. classes; or Three 180-min. classes</td>
<td>Automatic course failure, and possible expulsion with notification to the home school</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* The notification letters are intended to ensure that you are well advised in advance of any potential for failure or dismissal, so that you can take steps to avoid this.

As the table shows, **missing more than 20% of any class (e.g., due to undocumented illness, travel delays, flight cancellations, over-sleeping, etc.) results in automatic failure of the course.**

If you miss an assessment in class due to an absence, you will be able to make it up in the following instances:

- You provide a relevant doctor's note from a local medical professional to your Program Coordinator within 24 hours of your absence (a scan or photograph sent via e-mail are acceptable).
- A CIEE staff member verifies that you were too ill to attend class.
- You provide evidence of a family emergency to your Program Coordinator.
- You have an approved absence related to the observance of a religious holiday from the Academic Director based on a request submitted before you arrived onsite.

**Please note:** Absences incurred due to documented illness, documented family emergency or the observance of a religious holiday approved before arrival onsite do not count towards the total of absences. Students may self-certify one absence due to illness without providing a doctor's note as long as they notify the Program Coordinator within 24 hours of their absence by e-mail or a text message.

**Other attendance-related policies**

If you transfer from one CIEE class to another during the Add/Drop period, you will not be considered absent from the first session(s) of the new class provided you were marked present for the first session(s) of the original class.

If you are over 15 minutes late for a class, the instructor is required to mark you absent.
In case of class conflicts (irregularities in the class schedule, including field trips and make-up classes), always contact the Academic Department to decide the appropriate course of action.

Please remember to track your attendance on the Canvas Course Sites and report any errors in the record to the Academic Department within one week of the discrepancy date, as later claims may not be considered.

These attendance rules also apply to any required co-curricular excursion, activity, or event, and to for-credit internships.

CIEE staff does not manage absences at partner institutions providing direct enrollment classes (FAMU, ECES and FSV), but they have similar attendance policies and attendance is monitored there. Grade penalties may result from excessive absences.

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.
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.
Peer-review 4 due on Thursday

Final research paper due by midnight of Sunday.

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**

