FOUNDATIONS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENCE (IR110)

**Course duration:** 54 hours lecture and class time (Over three weeks)

**Summer School Programme Area:** International Relations, Government and Society

**LSE Teaching Department:** Department of Psychological and Behavioural Science

**Lead Faculty:** Dr Michael Muthukrishna and Dr Jennifer Sheehy-Skeffington (Dept. of Psychological and Behavioural Science)

**Pre-requisites:** None.

**Course Description:**

This course provides an introduction to human cognition and behaviour, addressing foundational topics in psychological science. These foundational topics include key concepts such as evolution, genetics, neuroscience, and culture, and specific topics, such as perception, memory, cognition, decision-making, child development, psychopathology, personality, intelligence, emotion, attraction, cross-cultural differences, prejudice, norms, attitudes, social learning, social influence, group processes, and intergroup relations.

Uniquely, the course will offer an integrated perspective on these topics, investigating the evolution and variation in human psychology over time, across cultures, and over the lifespan. The course will introduce the history of the study of humans and human psychology, offering students the historical context to trends in research.

By the end of the course, students will have a broad knowledge of key topics in psychology and related disciplines. Students will be prepared for more in-depth investigations of more advanced topics in later courses. They will also understand how psychology relates to and informs other disciplines concerned with humans and human behaviour. The course is therefore suitable to students in psychology and behavioural science and also those enrolled in other programmes who wish to enrich their understanding by drawing on the psychological sciences.

The course begins with some historical context, some philosophy of science, links to other fields, and events in history that help students contextualize their learning. With this context in place, students are introduced to a theoretical framework grounded in evolutionary biology for organizing their knowledge, so that what they learn is less a series of disconnected topics and more a natural expansion from the individual brain, to individuals in society, to societal level processes. The course then brings it back together, with links to real world issues throughout.

The course comprises 12 sessions with a lecture followed by a class.

**Reading:**

The two key texts for the course are:


Additional texts used will include:


We will draw on other material as it becomes relevant.

Course Structure:

- Lectures: 36 hours
- Classes: 18 hours

Formative course work:

- A blog post, submitted to the class teacher on Friday of Week One (August 2). Feedback will be given by Tuesday of Week Two (August 6). This will help students prepare for the summative blog post, which can be an improved version of this formative post.

Assessment:

The assessment consists of:

- A blog post of 1,000 words due by Friday of Week 2 (August 9). The blog post will count for 40% of the final mark. Students will receive their grades by Tuesday of Week 3 (August 13). The blog post is designed to develop skills in communication and summarizing of research, as well as encouraging students to seek out new findings in psychological and behavioural science and find ways to connect these to the real world. The blog post will be an informative, but engaging (or even entertaining) report on a psychological topic or finding that members of the public would find interesting. It could also integrate several findings to offer new ways to think about common real world experiences. Full guidance for the blog post will be provided at the beginning of the course.
- A two-hour written examination at the end of the programme, the precise time and location of the exam will be circulated during the programme. The exam will count for 60% of the final mark. The final exam will consist of multiple choice questions and short answer questions.

Lecture Schedule:

Section I: Laying the Foundations: Theory and History

1. Introduction (Mon 29 July)
   - Lecture 1a
   - Introduction to the Course
Introduction to Psychological Science and the Human Animal

Lecture 1b
Major approaches to Psychological Science: History of the Study of Humans and Human Evolution

2. Evolution and Learning (Tues 30 July)

Lecture 2a
Genetic and Cultural Evolution

Lecture 2b
Social Learning

Section II. From the Self to Others

3. Perception and Cognition (Wed 31 July)

Lecture 3a
Perception and the Brain

Lecture 3b
Cognitive Processes

4. Language and Intelligence (Thurs 1 August)

Lecture 4a.
Language

Lecture 4b
Intelligence, Rationality and Reasoning I

5. Individual Differences I (Fri 2 August)

Lecture 5a
Intelligence, Rationality and Reasoning II

Lecture 5b
Psychopathology

6. Individual Differences II (Mon 5 August)

Lecture 6a
Personality

Lecture 6b
Relational Orientations

7. Emotions and Attraction (Tues 6 August)

Lecture 7a
Emotions

Lecture 7b
Attraction


Lecture 8a
Norms and Preferences

Lecture 8b
Influence, Persuasion: Changing Beliefs and Behaviours

Section II. Societal Psychology

9. Cooperation and Social Organization (Thurs 8 August)

Lecture 9a
Ethnic Psychology, Cooperation, Conflict and Corruption I

Lecture 9b
Ethnic Psychology, Cooperation, Conflict and Corruption I

Friday, 9 August – No class. Blog post due.

10. Group Dynamics and Intergroup Relations (Mon 12 August)

Lecture 10a
Group Dynamics

Lecture 10b
Intergroup Relations

11. Psychology in Society (Tues 13 August)
Lecture 11a
Poverty, Wealth, and Socioeconomic Status

Lecture 11b
Ideology and Inequality

12. Bringing it All Together (Wed 14 August)

Lecture 12a
Institutions and Innovation

Lecture 12b
Across the World, Over the Lifespan, and Into the Future

Thursday, 15 August – No class

Friday, 16 August – Final Exam

Seminar Schedule:

Seminar 1: Writing a Blog Post (Mon 29 July)
Key questions:
- What is the blog post assignment trying to test?
- What makes a good blog post?

Useful resources:
Some past blog posts will be linked or provided and they will be marked in class to illustrate the assignment.

Seminar 2: The Replication Crisis and the WEIRD People Problem (Tues 30 July)
Key questions:
- What is the replication crisis and how do we solve it?
- What is the WEIRD People Problem and how do we solve it?
- How are these connected and what does this have to do with abduction, theory, and philosophy of science

Useful resources:

Then skim the Wikipedia article: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Replication_crisis

Skim the replication paper on "Estimating the reproducibility of psychological science": http://science.sciencemag.org/content/349/6251/aac4716

For the replication paper, focus on trying to understand the figures (graphs).


Seminar 3: Evolution in Action (Wed 31 July)

This class will involve both discussion and activities that will give students practical exposure to how evolution works. This will include performing these simulations.

Key questions:
- What can evolutionary biology offer the psychological and behavioural sciences?

Useful readings:
Mesoudi, Alex. (2009). How cultural evolutionary theory can inform social psychology and vice versa. Psychological Review, (4)

Seminar 4: Measuring Perception and Cognition (Thurs 1 August)

This class will involve discussion and activities that will give students practical exposure to measuring perception and cognition. This will include the option to perform these measurements.

Key questions:
- How can we measure perception and cognition?

Seminar 5: Language (Friday 2 August)

Key questions:
- How do languages evolve?
- What are some differences between languages?
- How does language interact with culture (e.g. high vs low context culture)?

Useful readings:
Seminar 6: Intelligence and Rationality (Mon 5 August)

This class will involve discussion and activities that will give students practical exposure to measuring intelligence and rational behaviour using tests and economic games. This will include the option to take these tests and play these economic games.

Key questions:
- What is intelligence?
- Are humans rational?
- How can we use economic games to measure behaviour?

Useful readings:


Seminar 7: Personality (Tues 6 August)

This class will involve discussion and activities that will give students practical exposure to measuring personality. This will include the option to take a personality test.

Key questions:
- What is personality and how is it measured?
- How many personality types are there?
- What does personality predict?

Seminar 8: Attraction and Mating (Wed 7 August)

This class will involve discussion and activities that will give students practical exposure to the psychology of mating. This will include two Mating Games designed around Parental Investment Theory.

Key questions:
- What are the factors that affect mating decisions?
- Under what conditions can different mating behaviours and marriage institutions evolve?

Seminar 9: Designing a Behavioural Intervention (Thurs 8 August)

This class will involve discussion and activities that will give students practical exposure to levers they can use for behavioural interventions. This will include designing an intervention and discussing its probability of success.

Key questions:
How do we design a behavioural intervention?

Seminar 10: Mechanisms of Cooperation (Mon 12 August)
This class will involve discussion and activities that will give students practical exposure to how the mechanisms that sustain cooperation work. This will include playing some economic games.

Key questions:
- Why do we love and favour our families?
- Why do we love and favour our friends and people we know?
- Why do we care about gossip and reputations?
- Can religion sustain cooperation?
- Why do we follow the law?

Seminar 11: Group Dynamics and Intergroup Relations (Tues 13 August)
This class will involve discussion and activities that will give students practical exposure to group dynamics and intergroup relations. This will include playing some economic games and psychological experiments.

Key questions:
- What determines what group you identify with?
- What determines if groups are in conflict?
- What determines how you compete as individuals and as groups?
- Are group perceptions (e.g. stereotypes) accurate?

Seminar 12: Game Show (Wed 14 August)
This class will involve discussion and activities that will give students practical exposure to the features of social movements that can improve their success. This will include designing your own religion, debating over how humans may change in the next 10,000 to 100,000 years, and a Game Show.

Key questions:
- What determines if a religion will be successful?
- How is human biology, psychology, and culture changing and evolving?
- How can what we have learned be applied to tackle pressing problems?
Credit Transfer: If you are hoping to earn credit by taking this course, please ensure that you confirm it is eligible for credit transfer well in advance of the start date. Please discuss this directly with your home institution or Study Abroad Advisor.

As a guide, our LSE Summer School courses are typically eligible for three or four credits within the US system and 7.5 ECTS in Europe. Different institutions and countries can, and will, vary. You will receive a digital transcript and a printed certificate following your successful completion of the course in order to make arrangements for transfer of credit.

If you have any queries, please direct them to summer.school@lse.ac.uk