Philosophical and historical reflections on the theoretical and practical foundations of psychology: A critical perspective

Tentative Course Outline and Reading List

January 6, 2010:
1. Introduction: Philosophical, theoretical, and historical reflections in psychology.

Ontological reflections

January 13, 2010:
2. What is the nature of the discipline of psychology and what is the meaning of unification, fragmentation, and pluralism?
January 20, 2010:
3. Is an understanding of human nature important in psychology?

  [Do not focus on the objections, rather on the themes, e.g., “existence precedes essence.” Access: http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/sartre/works/exist/sartre.htm]

January 27, 2010:
4. What is the nature of psychological concepts and theories?


Epistemological reflections

February 3, 2010:
5. Positivism and its consequences in psychology?


February 10, 2010
6. Do categories such as interest or modernity play a role in knowledge production?

- Habermas, J. (1972). Knowledge and human interest (J.J. Shapiro, Trans.). Boston: Beacon Press. (German original published 1968)

**February 24, 2010:**

7. Do categories such as gender or culture play a role in knowledge production?


**Ethical-practical reflections**

**March 3, 2010:**

8. Should psychologists care about emancipation?


**March 10, 2010:**

9. What is the role of money and values in psychology?

March 17, 2010:
10. Is psychology about problem-solving or problem-making?


**Historical and metatheoretical reflections**

March 24, 2010:
11. Can we learn anything from history and historiography?


March 31, 2010:
12. Should psychologists think “outside the box”?

- Slife, B. D., & Reber, J. S. (2009). Is there a pervasive implicit bias against theism in psychology? *Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology, 29*(2), 63-79. [see also comments on this article] [Access via York University Libraries eResources]
**Evaluation**

**Regular attendance and participation**

- There are no regular exams in this course.
- In order to ensure that the material has been reflected upon adequately, regular attendance and participation is necessary.
- If more than 2 meetings in the term are missed, the student must take an exam regarding the missed meetings (regardless of the reasons for missing class).

**Presentation in class**

- The duration of the presentation (and leading a class discussion) for each student should be approximately 25 minutes (longer if a video is shown).
- Assessment of the presentation by the whole group is taken into account (peer evaluation). Written assessments by class include sections on "Strengths," "Suggestions for Improvement," and a "Grade."
- The presentation must go beyond class reading material and include additional sources. The presentation may include audiovisual material and class discussions should involve specific questions derived from the reading material.
- Presentations can be done individually or as a group effort.
- PowerPoint (or a similar presentation software) or transparencies are recommended.
- Provide an electronic copy of your PowerPoint presentation or a copy of your transparencies at least 12 hours before your presentation (send to instructor via e-mail).
- List all sources at the end of the PowerPoint presentation (or transparencies).
- The presentation (and leading a class discussion) counts towards 30% of the grade.
- Averaged grades and feedback are provided usually one week after the presentation.
- Grading for each presentation: Instructor: 50%. Peers: 50%.
- Letter grades will be used (A+, A, A-, B+, etc.) which are converted into numbers (A+ = 9, A = 8, A- = 7, etc.) which are averaged (for instance, A- ranges from 6.5 to 7.49).

**Paper**

- The written elaboration of the presentation in the form of a manuscript is required.
- The paper must be written in APA format and have a length of 18 pages including references. References must be drawn from at least 15 different academic sources. Wikipedia does not count as an academic source!
- The paper must have a psychological perspective!
- The deadline for the paper is April 14, 2010. There will be deductions for late submissions. Deductions: Each day late will count as a deduction of 0.15 for the first two days, 0.25 for the next two days, 0.35 for the next two days, etc. This means if you receive an average A for the paper and you are two days late you would receive: 8 – 0.30 = 7.7 (which is still an A).
- All papers must be sent as an e-mail attachment to the instructor [criterion for date of submission] and handed in [mailbox, secretary, instructor] as a hardcopy until Friday.
Organization: 1. Title page (p. 1): Title of paper, name, student number; course title; term. 2. Abstract (p. 2) (150 - 200 words). 3. Paper and 4. References (pp. 3 – 18): [Start a new page for the reference section]. Typing: Papers should be typed in Times Roman. Use a 12-point font and double spacing for the entire manuscript. Use 1-inch margins on the left, right, top, and bottom of the page. The text is to be left-aligned and not right-justified. Proofread the paper. Staple finished manuscript]. More information on guidelines for the paper will be provided in one of the class meetings.

- The paper represents 40% of the grade.
- Grading: Letter grades.

Comments

All three papers must be read but for the written comments (response to the reading) 2 out of the 3 readings are chosen.

- Choose 1st reading (decide which one of the two texts is the first).
  - 400 words each week concerning the 1st reading (use the word count function in your word processing program and list the number of words at the end of the comment). Do not count headings, references, and direct quotes!
  - Identify the most significant issues (2-3) in the texts and respond to them. Or, alternatively, respond to the main argument in the article.
  - A comment should be evaluative, provide arguments, and express a viewpoint. It contains an assessment of the text (see American Psychologist for advanced examples).
  - Respond to essential issues of the reading material! Do not summarize material. Referencing of chosen text is not required -- but referencing is necessary if you use additional sources.

- Choose 2nd reading: same rules as 1st reading.

- Comments are due on each Monday at 15:00 and must be sent as 1 attachment to my e-mail address (see above) (or in the main text). Identify texts.

- Write your name at the top of the comments!

- Write 6030 in the "subject" heading of the e-mail.

- There will be deductions for late submissions and comments received on Tuesday after 15:00 will not be accepted anymore (Exception: documented medical reasons).

- The first comments are due on Monday, January 11 at 15:00 for the Wednesday, January 13 meeting. Comments are usually returned on Wednesdays.

- It is the responsibility of the student to make sure that all comments were received back.

- If the day of a comment submission falls on a holiday, comments must be submitted earlier - if student cannot submit on a holiday.

- Comments represent 30% of the grade.

- Grading: Each weekly comment will receive a qualitative grade: Outstanding (exceptional) = A+; excellent = A; Very good = A-; Good = B+; etc. These qualitative comments are converted into numbers (A+ = 9, A = 8, A- = 7, etc.) and averaged.

- For the day of one’s own presentation, no questions/comments need to be submitted!
- In addition, you are allowed to miss 2 comment submissions (Monday submissions).