PHIL10131 – Social Cognition

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1. Course Summary:

In this course, we will examine the question of how we cognise other people’s behaviour, focusing on our ability to ‘mindread’, understood as the ability to attribute mental states to other human beings. In the first part of the course, we will explore philosophical theories of mindreading, and how current neuroscientific, social scientific, and psychological research bears on these theories. In the second part of the course, we will explore recent developments in the philosophy of social cognition, and in particular, the problem of inaccurate mindreading. In this part of the course, we will survey the science of implicit bias, the cognitive role of stereotypes, and motivated mindreading. In the final part of the course, we will investigate the extent to which contemporary mindreading research can help us to understand better the epistemology of peer disagreement, and the nature and rectification of epistemic injustice.

2. Core Texts:


3. Assessment:

This course will be assessed by class participation (5%), a mid-term essay (1500 words) due on Thursday 27th of February by 12pm (30%), and a final essay (2000 words) due on Thursday 23rd of April, by 12pm (65%).

4. Seminar and Tutorial Content:

In seminars, we will discuss the main ideas and claims of the core reading material. It is essential that you read all of the core readings before the weekly seminar. Seminars will not be based on lecture-slides, but on open discussion.

In tutorials, we will discuss and clarify the main ideas of the secondary reading material. It is essential that you read at least one of the secondary readings before your tutorial. For each of your tutorials, you will be required to write a ‘critical reflection’, which will consist of a short paragraph about one of the secondary readings. In this critical reflection, you should (a) describe the central thesis of a secondary reading, and (b) give some of your own critical ideas about the reading (e.g. questions about its thesis, problems with its arguments, objections to the thesis, etc.). Please bring your critical reflections to your tutorial. We will read and discuss these reflections in tutorials.

Class participation will be judged by your presenting at least two of your critical reflections in tutorials in weeks 1-6, and at least three critical reflections in weeks 7-11.

Week 1

SEMINAR TOPIC: INTRODUCTION THE PROBLEM OF MINDREADING

Core Reading:

Secondary Reading:
1. Spaulding, Chapter 1.

**Week 2**

SEMINAR TOPIC: THEORY-THEORY

Core Reading:
1. Lavelle, Chapter 2

Secondary Reading:

**Week 3**

SEMINAR TOPIC: SIMULATION THEORY

Core Reading:
1. Lavelle, Chapter 5.

Secondary Reading:

**Week 4**

SEMINAR TOPIC: MIRROR NEURONS AND MINDREADING

Core Reading:
1. Lavelle, Chapter 6.
Secondary Reading:

Week 5

SEMINAR TOPIC: MINDREADING ONE’S OWN MIND

Core Reading:

Secondary Reading:

***Flexible Learning Week: February 17th-21st***

Week 6

*Mid-Term Essay Due Thursday 27th of February by 12pm*

SEMINAR TOPIC: DO ANIMALS MINDREAD?

Core Reading:

Secondary Reading:
Week 7

SEMINAR TOPIC: IMPLICIT BIAS

Core Reading:
1. Spaulding, Chapter 3

Secondary Reading:

Week 8

SEMINAR TOPIC: STEREOTYPES & MOTIVATED MINDREADING

Core Reading:
1. Spaulding, Chapter 4

Secondary Reading:

Week 9

SEMINAR TOPIC: MODEL THEORY

Core Reading:
1. Spaulding, Chapter 5
Secondary Reading:

**Week 10**

SEMINAR TOPIC: MINDREADING & THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF DISAGREEMENT

Core Reading:
1. Spaulding, chapter 6

Secondary Reading:

**Week 11**

SEMINAR TOPIC: MINDREADING & EPISTEMIC INJUSTICE

Core Reading:

Secondary Reading:

*Final Essay Due Thursday 23rd of April, by 12pm*
5. Further Reading:


Watson, J.B. (1913). Psychology as the behaviourist views it. Psychological Review, 20 155 - 177