



PHIL249 Biology, Mind and Culture

SEMESTER 2
2008

MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY
DIVISION OF SOCIETY, CULTURE, MEDIA AND PHILOSOPHY
UNIT OUTLINE
PHIL249: Biology Mind and Culture

Semester Two, 2008

Unit Convenor: Dr Elizabeth Schier

Students in this unit should read this unit outline carefully at the start of semester. It contains important information about the unit. If anything in it is unclear, please consult one of the teaching staff in the unit.

ABOUT THIS UNIT

This course is devoted to examining the ways in which evolutionary biology can shed light on the nature of the human mind and culture. The course begins with an introduction to evolutionary theory and a discussion of some foundational issues concerning its nature and structure. What is fitness? What is adaptationism? What is the unit of selection? A substantial part of the course, however, will be taken up with investigating extensions of evolutionary theory to the explanation of minds and culture by considering a variety of comparative examples.

Unit rationale: This unit is designed to introduce students to the sorts of problems that puzzle biologists, philosophers of biology and evolutionary psychologists. Students will develop a firm understanding of the science of biology and its conceptual problems as well as the application of evolutionary biological theorising to a number of comparative cases.

TEACHING STAFF

Convenor: Dr Elizabeth Schier. W6A 740 Phone 9850 8858.

Email: elizabeth.schier@scmp.mq.edu.au Consultation by appointment

Elizabeth will be away in the second week at a conference. The lectures in that week will be given by Dr Wayne Christensen and the tutorials by Glenn Carruthers.

CLASSES

Lectures	Wednesday 10am	E5A 118
	Thursday 10am	E5A 118
Tutorials	Wednesday 1pm	W5A 204
	Thursday 1pm	W5A 204

The timetable for classes can be found on the University web site at:
<http://www.timetables.mq.edu.au/>

N.B. Tutorial attendance is compulsory. Tutorials commence in the second week of semester.

This unit is worth 4 credit points. It is assumed that one credit point equals three hours work per week on average, across the whole semester (including non-teaching weeks). For this unit you are therefore expected to put in on average *12 hours work per week* across the whole semester (including the 3 hours of classes each week).

i-lecture The lectures will be recorded with i-lecture, but the recordings will only be released for revision purposes before the essays. The recordings are not a substitute for lecture attendance.

REQUIRED AND RECOMMENDED TEXTS

The required reading for this unit is Sterelny, K. and Griffiths, P. (1999) *Sex and Death: An introduction to Philosophy of Biology* The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, available at the Co-op Bookstore on campus. Readings for the final weeks will be available via the unit website.

The readings are **compulsory** reading for this unit. You will be expected to keep up with the readings throughout semester, and tutorial discussion will presume prior familiarity with the relevant readings.

An additional list of Supplementary Readings will be provided with the relevant essay questions.

UNIT WEB PAGE

The web page for this unit will be on Online Learning @ MQ, which is accessible at: <https://learn.mq.edu.au/webct/>

LEARNING OUTCOMES

The learning outcomes of this unit are:

- A good general knowledge of the major issues in philosophy of biology and evolutionary psychology.
- An ability to understand and analyse theories and arguments in the relevant literatures
- An ability to critically evaluate these theories and arguments.
- The ability to develop one's own view or perspective, through consideration and analysis of the views and arguments presented in the unit, and the ability to present one's views with clarity and rigour.
- Clarity of thought; clarity of verbal expression; clarity of written expression and exposition.

In addition to the unit-specific learning objectives, academic programs at Macquarie seek to develop students' generic skills in a range of areas. An aim of this unit is for students to develop their skills in the following:

1. *Comprehension skills*: skills involved in *understanding* complex ideas and arguments and reading, *understanding*, and *analysing* complex texts.
2. *Critical thinking skills*: skills involved in *analysing*, *evaluating*, and *criticising* views and arguments.
3. *Problem-solving skills*: skills that enable us to solve *practical* and *theoretical* problems through the application of theories and knowledge.
4. *Communication skills*: skills involved in *expressing* and *presenting* ideas clearly and logically, both orally (in tutorial discussions and presentations) and in writing (in essays).
5. *Creative-thinking skills*: skills involved in developing new ideas or perspectives and constructing arguments.
6. *Research skills*: skills that enable us to find out about and understand a new field of knowledge.

TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGY

PHIL249 is taught through lectures and tutorials. Opportunities will be provided throughout the unit for interactive discussion, in both lectures and tutorials.

There are weekly reading requirements that must be completed prior to lectures and tutorials. Students are expected to attend tutorials prepared to discuss the topics covered in the lectures and readings. Students are also expected to participate actively in lectures.

UNIT SCHEDULE

Note that the recommended readings for the lectures in each week will as a general rule form the basis for the tutorial on that material in the following week. For more precise details see tutorial questions on course website.

Week One Introduction to Biology

Sex and Death Chapter 2

Week Two Unit of Selection: genes

Sex and Death Chapter 3

Week Three Unit of Selection: Organisms

Sex and Death Chapter 4

Week Four Unit of Selection: Developmental Systems

Sex and Death Chapter 5

Week Five Organisms and Altruism

Sex and Death Chapter 8.

Week Six Are Species Real?

Sex and Death Chapter 9

Week Seven Adaptation and Explanation

Sex and Death Chapter 10

Week Eight Sociobiology and Evolutionary Psychology Introduction

Sex and Death Chapter 13

Week Nine Evolutionary Theories of Emotion

Sex and Death Chapter 14

Week Ten Hominids: The evolution of tools and culture

Mithen, Steven (1996). *The Prehistory of the Mind: A Search for the Origins of Art, Religion and Science*: Phoenix. Chapter 2

Week Eleven The evolution of Language

Donald, Merlin (1991). *Origins of the Modern Mind: Three Stages in the Evolution of Culture and Cognition*: Harvard University Press. Chapter 3

Week Twelve Do Chimps have a theory of mind?

Povinelli, Daniel J (1993). "Reconstructing the Evolution of the Mind." *American Psychologist* 48(5): 493-509.

Povinelli, Daniel J and Vonk, Jennifer (2003). "Chimpanzee Minds: Suspiciously Human." *Trends in Cognitive Science* 7(4) 157-60

Tomasello, Michael, Call, Josep and Hare, Brian (2003). "Chimpanzees Understand Psychological States- the Question Is Which Ones and to What Extent?" *Trends in Cognitive Science* 7(4) 153-6

Tomasello, Michael, Call, Josep and Hare, Brian (2003). "Chimpanzees Versus Humans: It's Not That Simple." *Trends in Cognitive Science* 7(6). 239-40.

Week Thirteen The Evolution of Self Consciousness

De Veer, Monique W, Gallup, Gordon G, Theall, Laura A, Van Den Bos, Ruud and Povinelli, Daniel J (2002). "An 8-Year Longitudinal Study of Mirror Self-Recognition in Chimpanzees." *Neuropsychologia*.

Gallup, Gordon G (1970). "Chimpanzees: Self Recognition." *Science* 167(3914): 86-87.

Povinelli, Daniel J and Cant, John G. H (1995). "Arboreal Clambering and the Evolution of Self-Conception." *the Quarterly review of Biology* 70(4): 393-421.

Povinelli, Daniel J (2001). The Self: Elevated in Consciousness and Extended in Time. *The Development of the Extended Self in Preschool Children: Theory and Research*. K. Skene and C. Moore (Eds.): Cambridge University Press.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ASSESSMENT AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

Important Note: All assessment components in this unit are compulsory. Students who have not completed all of the assessments will not be eligible to pass the unit.

PHIL249: Biology, Mind and Culture

Assessment for the unit is made up of five components: 2 essays, an essay plan, a report on how essay criticisms were addressed and tutorial work.

(i) Two Essays	2000 words each	25%
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The essays are designed to develop your ability to engage with the philosophical issues and questions in detail. Essay writing develops and tests your ability to express, analyse and organise key ideas clearly and systematically, and to develop an argument in a sustained way. Essay topics will be distributed at least 3 weeks prior to each due date. The first essay will be marked two weeks after the due date and will be returned in tutorials. The second essay will be available for collection by the 28th November.

Essay Due Dates:

First Essay Due:

Thursday October 16th, 4pm

Second Essay Due:

Thursday November 13, 4pm

(ii) Essay Plan	20%
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The essay plan is designed to assist you in writing essays, in particular to lay out your ideas in a logical way and to ensure that you have a complete and good argument. It is a plan for the first essay and is due three weeks before the first essay. If you hand up your plan on time you will have it back within ten days.

Due Date

Thursday 25th September

(iii) Essay Response	10%
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The essay response is also designed to help you become a reflective and therefore better essay writer. It will be due at the same time as the second essay and the task is to reflect on the critical comments given on your first essay and to demonstrate how you have improved on these problems in your second essay.

Due Date

Thursday November 13, 4pm

(iv) Tutorial Work	20%
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The tutorial work is designed to assist you in reading and understanding philosophical research. Tutorial attendance and preparation is compulsory. Each week you will need to hand up either answers for the tutorial questions or a one page summary of the argument of at least one of the set readings. The choice of which task will be set by the convenor and will be detailed on the tutorial sheet for that week (available on course site). This is due at the time of your tutorial and if you do not attend the tutorial the written work for that week will not be counted. You need to attend and hand up the work for at least 75% of the tutorials. Unless supported by medical documentation or the equivalent, students who fail to attend at least 75% of

tutorials and lectures will not be eligible to pass the unit. If you do more than 75% of the tutorials the marks from your best 75% will count to your final grade.

Submission of Work:

Please submit your essays and plans and response through the **SCMP office** on Level 1, Building W6A. All essays must be attached to a signed Philosophy Cover Sheet. No essays will be accepted via email.

You will also need to submit both essays to turnitin. Your marks will not be finalised until your essays have been screened

Tutorial work is to be handed up at the end of the tutorial.

Extensions must be requested **before** the due date. Essays submitted after the due date, or after the extension date, will lose 1 mark for each day late. Please note that deadlines in other subjects, and workload pressures, will not be regarded as grounds for the granting of extensions.

PLAGIARISM

The University defines plagiarism in its rules: "Plagiarism involves using the work of another person and presenting it as one's own." Plagiarism is a serious breach of the University's rules and carries significant penalties. You must read the University's practices and procedures on plagiarism. These can be found in the *Handbook of Undergraduate Studies* or on the web at:

<http://www.student.mq.edu.au/plagiarism/>

The policies and procedures explain what plagiarism is, how to avoid it, the procedures that will be taken in cases of suspected plagiarism, and the penalties if you are found guilty. Penalties may include a deduction of marks, failure in the unit, and/or referral to the University Discipline Committee.

TURNITIN

This unit uses the anti-plagiarism system Turnitin. *Both essays* are to be processed through Turnitin

Login to Turnitin: http://www.scmp.mq.edu.au/ug_turnitin.html

Your login name is your official Macquarie email address; your password will be sent to this address prior to the first assignment to be processed by Turnitin.

Further information on Turnitin can be found at:

http://www.scmp.mq.edu.au/ug_turnitin_instructions.html

UNIVERSITY POLICY ON GRADING

Academic Senate has a set of guidelines on the distribution of grades across the range from fail to high distinction. Your final result will include one of these grades plus a standardised numerical grade (SNG).

On occasion your raw mark for a unit (i.e., the total of your marks for each assessment item) may not be the same as the SNG which you receive. Under the Senate guidelines, results may be scaled to ensure that there is a degree of comparability across the university, so that units with the same past performances of their students should achieve similar results.

It is important that you realise that the policy does not require that a minimum number of students are to be failed in any unit. In fact it does something like the opposite, in requiring examiners to explain their actions if more than 20% of students fail in a unit.

The process of scaling does not change the order of marks among students. A student who receives a higher raw mark than another will also receive a higher final scaled mark.

For an explanation of the policy see

<http://www.mq.edu.au/senate/MQUonly/Issues/Guidelines2003.doc> or
<http://www.mq.edu.au/senate/MQUonly/Issues/detailedguidelines.doc>

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Macquarie University provides a range of Academic Student Support Services. Details of these services can accessed at <http://www.student.mq.edu.au>

I hope you enjoy this unit
Elizabeth Schier