

# THEORY OF MIND

Psychology 456

Queen's University

Winter 2016

W: 1–2:30, F: 11:30–1, ELLIS

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## Syllabus

### Introduction

Theory of mind is the everyday understanding that people do things be-

particularly associated with social-cognitive difficulties. Thus, theory of mind development is not only an interesting topic of study, it is also of practical importance.

## General Structure of the Course



In week 10 and then part of week 11, we will have more time for group work. It is my hope that members of the group will have rough drafts of their contributions to the TiCSarticle and will thus have the opportunity to get constructive feedback on the ideas and writing from their other group members. By the end of this period, the article should have its basic form, even if it's rough.

At the end of week 11 and for all of week 12, we will have two groups per class make presentations to communicate the results of their research. This presentation should remind the class of the introductory material that was presented in week 9 and then delve more deeply into the research that they have done. As with the first presentations, the purpose is to encourage groups to make progress toward their goals while communicating material to the rest of the students in the course. Presentations can be up to 30 minutes long each (inclusive of discussion time), and we will leave some time at the end for the rest of the students in the course to evaluate what they have learned.

Each group's review paper will be due on the Monday April 10, which is the first Monday after classes officially end. Only one paper will be submitted along with a detailed description of the work that each person in the group did, agreed upon and attested by each member of the group.

#### Special notes about group work

I realize that group work poses many challenges as students with different motivations, backgrounds, and talents are asked to work together toward a common goal. Some of the challenges are similar to those that are faced in real-world productive environments, academic or otherwise. I expect that each group will have some of these sorts of everyday challenges and will organize themselves to negotiate them successfully.

2. Given that criticisms are not intended as judgments on the person, it is important not to take them as such.

3. Specific criticisms of ideas are clear, constructive and emphasize that everyone is working toward a common goal. Non-specific criticisms feel unprincipled, ad hoc, and are more easily taken personally. For instance, try not to say “This doesn’t make sense to me.” Instead, try to say “I am not sure I understood what you were getting at here,

other develop better work, but if someone in the group “bails,” the rest of the students in the group WILL NOT BE PENALIZED. This will be true even if the extent to which a student bails is extreme.

Assessment for Module II will be made as follows:

- 20% — Quality of contribution to group work as apparent to me and rated by members of the group
- 30% — Quality of contribution to the presentations
- 30% — Quality of unique contribution to the review paper
- 20% — Contribution to the overall quality of the review paper as apparent to me and rated by members of the group.

# Schedule of Class Topics and Readings

## MODULE I

### Week 1: What is a theory of mind?

Wednesday, Jan 11: Introduction to the class and get into groups

Friday, Jan 13: “Social” cognition in the wild

Clayton, N. S., Dally, J. M., & Emery, N. J. (2007). Social cognition by food-caching corvids: The western scrub-jay as a natural psychologist. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B* 362, 507–522.

### Week 2: Diagnosing theory of mind in children

Wednesday, Jan 18: The classic “false belief” task

Wellman, H. M., Cross, D. & Watson, J. (2001). Meta-analysis of theory-of-mind development: The truth about false belief. *Child Development*, 72, 655-684.

Friday, Jan 20: False belief in younger children and infants

Onishi, K. H. & Baillargeon, R. (2005). Do 15-month-old infants understand false beliefs? *Science*, 308, 255–258.

Heyes, C. (2014). False belief in infancy: a fresh look. *Developmental Science*, 17, 647–654.

### Week 3: Executive functioning and theory of mind

Wednesday, Jan 25: Overview

Devine, R. T. & Hughes, C. (2014). Relations between false belief understanding and executive function in early childhood: A meta-analysis. *Child Development*, *85*, 1777-1794.

Friday, Jan 27: The “emergence” account

Carlson, S. M., Claxton, L. J., & Moses, L. J. (2015). The relation between executive function and theory of mind is more than skin deep. *Journal of Cognition and Development*, *16*, 186–197.

Benson, J. E., Sabbagh, M. A., Carlson, S. M., & Zelazo, P. D. (2013). Individual differences in executive functioning predict preschoolers’ improvement from theory-of-mind training. *Developmental Psychology*, *49*, 1615–1627.

#### **Week 4: Broader conceptualizations of theory of mind**

Wednesday, Feb 1: Before False Belief

Peterson, C. C., Wellman, H. M., & Slaughter, V. S. (2012). The mind behind the message: Advancing theory-of-mind scales for typically developing children, and those with deafness, autism or Asperger syndrome. *Child Development*, *83*, 469–485.

Liszkowski, U., Carpenter, M. & Tomasello, M. (2008). Twelve-month-olds communicate helpfully and appropriately for knowledgeable and ignorant partners. *Cognition*, *108*, 732-739.

Friday, Feb 3: After False Belief

Lagattuta, K. H., Kramer, H. J., Kennedy, K., Hjortsvang, K., Goldfarb, D. & Tashjian, S. (2015). Beyond Sally’s missing marble: Further development in children’s understanding of mind and emotion in middle childhood. *Advances in Child Development and Behavior*, *48*, 185-217.

#### **Week 5: Biological bases of Theory of Mind**

Wednesday, Feb 8: Brain development

Sabbagh, M. A., Bowman, L. C., Evraire, L. E., Ito, J. M. B. (2009). Neurodevelopmental correlates of theory of mind in preschool children. *Child Development*, 80, 1147-1162.

Friday, Feb 10: Genetic and temperamental effects

Lackner, C. L., Sabbagh, M. A., Hallinan, E., Liu, X., & Holden, J. J. A. (2011). Dopamine receptor D4 gene variation predicts preschoolers' developing theory of mind. *Developmental Science*.

Wellman, H. M., Lane, J. D., LaBounty, J. & Olson, S. L. (2011). Observant, nonaggressive temperament predicts theory of mind development. *Developmental Science*, 14, 319-326.



## Presentations from Groups E & F

### **Academic Integrity**

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