

Module Title and Code

PS4003 Theoretical issues in Psychology

Lecturer(s)

All academic staff

Contact Hours

Two semesters: 22 lectures; 3 seminars; 100 hours independent study

ECTS Value

5 ECTS (=125 student hours)

Rationale and Aims

The aim of this course is to consider theoretical issues in psychology. Each lecture will address a different theoretical issue in psychology, ranging from current controversies to enduring 'chestnuts'. Cogent arguments pertaining to alternative views on each issue will be described, any relevant empirical evidence will be considered, and the current psychological thinking on the issue will be critically appraised.

For whom is the module intended?

Psychology Senior Sophister SH/TSM students and Higher Diploma in Psychology Year 2 students (optional)

How does it fit in to the academic programme?

This module provides advanced coverage of theoretical material across all aspects of the discipline of psychology.

Is it mandatory or optional?

Mandatory for Senior Sophister students; Optional for Higher Diploma Year 2.

Are there prerequisites?

Cognate foundation modules.

From a teaching point of view, what are the intentions of the lecturer?

To provide students with advanced arguments pertaining to contemporary and classic theoretical issues in the discipline.

Course Content

Each academic is invited to give one lecture on a theoretical issue in their area of research and expertise. This module is continually updated and recent modules have included the following topics:

1. Individuals, psychology and the mind
2. Dualist versus reductionist interpretations of consciousness
3. Attachment Theory
4. Can we understand minds by studying brains?
5. Cognitive heuristics and biases
6. Theoretical approaches to perception: from gestaltism to constructivism
7. Levels of analysis in the explanation of human behaviour.
8. The Electric Brain: How Electrophysiology Informs Psychology
9. Is psychological science possible?
10. Affect and Cognition in health models.
11. Theorising power in the therapeutic relationship
12. Applications of relational frame theory to clinical psychology
13. Psychoanalytic theory: its place in psychology

Indicative Resources

Required text(s)

Readings from the relevant literature for each lecture are made available throughout the module.

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

At the end of the module, students should be able to do the following for each topic covered in the module:

1. describe the issue [PO1,6];
2. outline the alternative views [PO2,3,4];
3. provide succinct summaries of theoretical arguments (and any empirical evidence) supporting and/or refuting alternative views [PO2,3,4,6];
4. critically evaluate the current psychological thinking on the issue [PO4].

Methods of Teaching and Student Learning

The format of lectures is conventional but students are encouraged to ask questions and to engage the lecturer in discussion where practicable. The fact that each lecture addresses an issue of particular relevance and interest to the lecturer facilitates increased class discussion and debate.

Each student is assigned to a seminar group and will meet three times to discuss each of three selected topics. Students submit one essay on one of the three topics before the appropriate seminar and will present it in the seminar. All students are required to carry out the reading for each topic before the corresponding seminar.

Inclusive curriculum: Each lecture and any supporting and accompanying documentation is posted on our school website to facilitate independent study and self-paced learning.

Methods of Assessment

This module is assessed by continuous assessment of one essay (2,500 words, 32%) and one written examination (68%) in the annual session. The exam is 3 hours in duration and students are required to answer one question discursively. It is expected that responses should be critical, original and synthetic and should be based on reading beyond the lecture notes.

Students are given very detailed guidelines in their handbook as to grading criteria for degree classes.

Evaluation

All modules are evaluated by students by means of CAPSL survey requested by the School and all feedback is noted and incorporated in module design where appropriate for delivery of the module in subsequent years.

Feedback is also delivered via student representatives at the School's once a term staff-student meetings, at School Committee meetings and at the Committee for Undergraduate Teaching & Learning meetings.