Animal and Human Minds
Spring 2010

Course description: This course will consider the similarities and differences between humans and animals from a psychological perspective, and examine how our own psychology can often lead us astray, so that we either see too much similarity or exaggerate the differences. The course will cover four interlinking topics:

1. The issues of animism and anthropomorphism, where we will explore the psychological attributes that cause us to (a) attribute life to inanimate objects and (b) attribute human motivations and feelings to other animals. What is the basis for such attributions? Are they justified on evolutionary grounds?
2. The psychological and bodily mechanisms that can explain why animals do the things they do, as a means of illustrating that, just because an animal looks as if it's thinking about the world in a human-like way, this need not be the case.
3. An examination of the underlying philosophies that influence how we think about cognitive processes. In particular, the contrast between a Cartesian stance and a more Pragmatic "Embodied and Embedded" stance. Or, more simply, why brains aren't the whole story, and why cognitive systems aren't all in the head.
4. Whether we humans also 'anthropomorphise' our own behaviour, and can be mistaken about our minds, and what we use them for.

Instructor: Louise Barrett, D858 (317-5039), louise.barrett@uleth.ca

Teaching Assistant: April Takahashi, B830, april.takahashi@uleth.ca

Lectures: Monday, Wednesday and Friday. 12.00 - 12.50 in PE264.

Textbook: The textbook for this course takes the form of chapters from a book I have written specifically to accompany the course. These will be posted onto webCT. In addition, there will one reading from the primary literature every week that will form the basis of the class discussion/lecture on each Friday. You will be expected to read the paper before class and to arrive prepared!
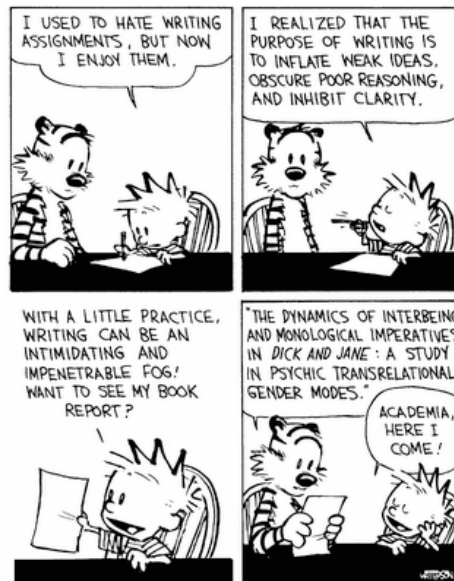
Coursework and Assessment:

The course will be assessed by two written assignments (worth 30% and 35%) and one exam (35%).

ASSIGNMENT #1: a written assignment based on the Pecha-kucha concept worth 30%.
The aim here is getting you to work within tight constraints and yet be as creative as possible. This will consist of a putting together a short essay/presentation, consisting of 20 slides accompanied by text.
You will **NOT** have to present these in front of class as part of the assignment (but if there is any interest, April and I will organize a Pecha-kucha evening where you can have a go if you want to on a purely voluntary, no credit basis: you know, just for fun, as nerdy as that might sound.)

The Pecha-kucha format is is designed to avoid 'death by powerpoint'—those presentations where an endless array of bullet-pointed text is simply read out to you by the presenter at a pace much slower than you can read it for yourself. Basically, the idea is that people present 20 slides and speak about each one for 20 seconds, so the whole presentation takes 6 minutes and 40 seconds. The timing of the presentation is set ahead of time, so that the slideshow rolls auto-

matically and you have to match your spoken presentation to the images. It's a good laugh, and you learn a lot about putting together a decent argument, and a lot of presentation skills).

At a modest pace, one can speak about 75 words in 20 seconds, so the word limit for the overall presentation/essay is 1,500. see below **HOW TO SUBMIT YOUR PRESENTATION** for details of format and how to submit your work. Marks will be awarded for the originality of your idea, clarity of your reasoning and the creativity used in matching images to text.*

ASSIGNMENT #2: a term-paper (10-15 pages = 3000-4,500 words) worth 35%.
This will be on a subject of your choice relating to the course. I will provide a set of guidelines on webCT as to what I would like to see, but you are not limited to writing an essay if you have something else you would like to pursue. In 2008, two people performed a study of self-organizing behaviour in WalMart, and in 2009, someone built a robot replicating one of those we'll be discussing in the course. So, use your imagination and feel free to come and make suggestions. The only thing to bear in mind is that being different is NOT the easy option: if you're going to do it, you'll have to do it well.

3. **An EXAM covering all the course material worth 35%.**
where you will have a choice of answering **EITHER** a series of multiple-choice questions **OR** one from a choice of five essay-based questions .

***IMPORTANT: A NOTE ON THE ASSIGNMENTS:**
The aim here is to help you develop your skills at producing a clear, well thought out and cogent argument. Given this, you will have the chance to re-write your assignments, using the comments I provide, in order to improve them. Any re-written work will be remarked and if you do better, you will be awarded this as your final grade for this component. If you end up doing worse, you will receive the best mark as your final grade for this component. Re-writing is therefore a no-cost exercise for you: you can only do better, you cannot do worse.

Important Dates:

DEADLINE FOR ASSIGNMENT #1: FRIDAY FEBRUARY 5th 2010.

Rewrite deadline: March 5th 2010.

DEADLINE FOR ASSIGNMENT #2: FRIDAY MARCH 12th 2010

Rewrite deadline: **April 2nd 2010**

Grading:

Final letter grades for the course will be determined using the following scheme:

A+	91-100	C+	67-69
A	85-90	C	63-66
A-	81-84	C-	60-62
B+	77-80	D+	56-59
B	73-76	D	50-55
B-	70-72	F	<50

Syllabus:

1. Faces in the clouds.
2. Anthropomorphism and Anthropodenial.
3. Small brains, smart behaviour.
4. When does it pay to have a big brain? Or Why animals don't need to think like us to be interesting
5. Is the brain a computer?
6. Why you need a body to think.
7. Distributed cognition or why post-its make you smarter

SUBMITTING YOUR PRESENTATION FOR ASSIGNMENT #1

1. You should prepare a powerpoint or keynote presentation of 20 slides and you should type the text accompanying each slide underneath each slide in your slideshow (you have to ensure you have selected 'view presenter notes' to do this.)
2. You should send your presentation to the following email address: pecha.kucha.presentation@gmail.com. This is an address set up purely for this purpose. DON'T email anything else relating to class to this address. If you need to ask April or me anything use our personal addresses or email the class list psyc3850b@uleth.ca.
3. Submit a hard copy in class on February 5th in 'notes' format. This will print out both your slides and the accompanying notes, as shown below. If you're un-sure how to do this, just ask — we'll be delighted to show you. This need only be in black and white, as we will have the full colour email version on-line. A hard copy makes it easier for me to give you constructive feedback, and the

electronic copy ensures I see the presentation in all its colourful glory including any animations and video clips you might want to include.

Pecha-kucha presentations

Pecha-kucha presentations consist of 20 slides, each of which is spoken about for 20 seconds. The text and images should complement each other perfectly, and you should tell a story. Under no circumstances should your presentation include (a) bullet points (b) a blue background with yellow writing and (c) more than 6 words per slide. As 20 seconds translates into around 75 words, your essay presentation will add up to 1500 words in total.

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