

Syllabus

Week 0 (Sept 14). Taster session

Part 1. Enculturated Minds

Week 1 (Sept. 21). Introduction

In this session, we will give a historical overview of the relations between the studies of human culture and human cognition. We will especially focus on the models of the human mind used in the social sciences and the nature/culture divide.

Assignment:

Please think about how to characterize 'cognition' and 'culture' in ways that enable integrated research.

Readings:

Cerulo, Karen A., Vanina Leschziner, and Hana Shepherd. "Rethinking Culture and Cognition." *Annual Review of Sociology* 47, no. 1 (2021): 63–85. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-072320-095202>.

Bloch, Maurice. 1990. Language, Anthropology and Cognitive Science. *Man* (N.S.) 26:183-198.

Further readings:

Bloch, Maurice. 2012. Why anthropologists cannot avoid cognitive issues. In *Anthropology and the cognitive challenge*. Pp. 1-13. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tooby, John, and Leda Cosmides. 1992. The psychological foundations of culture. In *The Adapted Mind: Evolutionary Psychology and the Generation of Culture* edited by L. C. J. Barkow, J. Tooby Oxford University Press.

Week 2 (Sept. 28). Cultural variations in cognition

To what extent does enculturation shape how we think? In this session, we will review some studies that show that what varies across cultures is not just beliefs, values or preferences, but also the way people think.

Readings:

Strauss C. and N Quinn. 1997. Chapter 6. Metaphors for marriage and what they do. *A Cognitive Theory of Cultural Meaning*, 140-160.

Further readings:

Nisbett, R.E., Peng, K., Choi, I. and Norenzayan, A., 2001. Culture and systems of thought: holistic versus analytic cognition. *Psychological review*, 108(2), p.291.

Boroditsky, L., 2001. Does language shape thought?: Mandarin and English speakers' conceptions of time. *Cognitive psychology*, 43(1), pp.1-22.

Boroditsky's TED talk. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RKK7wGAYP6k>

Week 3 (Oct. 5). Innate vs. acquired: how deep does culture go?

We will look at how the innate/acquired distinction plays out for one specific cognitive capacity, viz. Theory of Mind (aka Mind-reading and naive psychology).

Readings

Astuti, R. 2015. Implicit and Explicit Theory of Mind. *Anthropology of this century*, May 2015.
<http://aotcpress.com/articles/implicit-explicit-theory-mind/>

Further readings:

Heyes, Cecilia M. 2018. Chapter 7. *Cognitive Gadgets : The Cultural Evolution of Thinking*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Keane, Webb 81. 2008. "Others, Other Minds, and Others' Theories of Other Minds: An Afterword on the Psychology and Politics of Opacity Claims.". *Anthropological Quarterly* 81 (2):473-482.

Part 2: Cultural transmission

Week 4 (Oct. 12). The nature of cultural beliefs

Some beliefs seem to be especially cultural: they are held by most members of a community but differ across communities. Religious beliefs are cases in point. Why are these beliefs so successful within their community?

Readings:

Sperber, D. 1985. Apparently irrational beliefs. In *On anthropological knowledge : three essays*. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press.

Further readings:

Astuti, R. & Bloch, M. 2013. Are Ancestors Dead? . In: Boddy J. & Lambek, M. (eds.) *companion to the anthropology of religion*. Chichester: Wiley Blackwell pp. 103-117.

Boyer, Pascal. 2000. Functional Origins of Religious Concepts: Ontological and Strategic Selection in Evolved Minds. *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 6 (2):195-214.

Sperber, D. 1997. Intuitive and Reflective Beliefs. *Mind & Language*, 12, 67-83.

Week 5 (Oct. 19). Cultural epidemiology and other models

During this session, we will review models of cultural evolution and evaluate their psychological assumptions.

Readings:

Sperber, Dan. 1985. Anthropology and Psychology: Towards an Epidemiology of Representations. *Man* 20 (1):73-89.

http://www.dan.sperber.fr/wp-content/uploads/1985_anthropology-and-psychology.pdf

Miton, Helena, and Hugo Mercier. "Cognitive Obstacles to Pro-Vaccination Beliefs." *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 19, no. 11 (November 1, 2015): 633–36. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2015.08.007>.

Further readings

Heintz, C., 2017. Cultural attraction theory. *The International Encyclopedia of Anthropology*, pp.1-10. <http://christophe.heintz.free.fr/papers/Heintz2017-preprint-CulturalAttractionTheory.pdf>

Heintz, C. and Claidière, N., 2015. Current Darwinism in social science. In *the Handbook of Evolutionary Thinking in the Sciences* (pp. 781-807). Springer, Dordrecht. <http://christophe.heintz.free.fr/papers/Heintz-Claidire-2014-Darwinism.pdf>

Week 6 (October 26) – reading week (no class, national holiday)

Week 7 (Nov. 2). Pedagogy and ostensive communication (Guest speaker – Radu Umbres)

During this session, we will investigate the mechanisms of ostensive communication and how these contribute to the spread of certain beliefs and practices. We will focus on two ethnographic examples - opacity and secrecy. - as they appear in rituals and in pranks.

Readings :

Jagiello, Robert, Cecilia Heyes, and Harvey Whitehouse. "Tradition and Invention: The Bifocal Stance Theory of Cultural Evolution." *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* (2022): 1-50.

https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:6dce33b1-8f92-46c6-ac4c-0e2997667a19/download_file?safe_filename=jagiello_et_al_2022_tradition_and_invention.pdf&file_format=application%2Fpdf&type_of_work=journal+article

Umbres, Radu. "Buckets of Steam and Left-handed Hammers. The Fool's Errand as Signal of Epistemic and Coalitional Dominance." *Journal of cognition and culture* 22, no. 1-2 (2022): 1-19.

Further readings:

Sperber, Dan, Fabrice Clément, Christophe Heintz, Olivier Mascaró, Hugo Mercier, Gloria Origgi, and Deirdre Wilson. "Epistemic vigilance." *Mind & language* 25, no. 4 (2010): 359-393.

Gergely, G., and G. Csibra. 2006. "Sylvia's recipe: The role of imitation and pedagogy in the transmission of human culture. " in *Roots of Human Sociality: Culture, Cognition, and Human Interaction*. Edited by N. J. Enfield and S. C. Levinson, pp. 229-255: Oxford: Berg Publishers.

Umbreş Radu, 2022 (forthcoming in *Journal for the Cognitive Science of Religion*) Ritual Animals also Require Pedagogy, Communication, and Social Reasoning.

Part 3: Cognition outside of the mind

Week 8 (Nov. 9). Situated and embodied cognition

The turn to practice and embodiment had a big impact in anthropology and sociology. Similarly, the study of interactions between processes of perception, action and thinking as they unfold in particular social environments led to a reconsideration of cognition beyond the mentalist, representational view. By combining a focus on the body and contextual interactions with questions about cognitive mechanisms, the new approaches promise a meaningful interdisciplinary pursuit.

Lizardo, Omar. 2004. "The Cognitive Origins of Bourdieu's Habitus." *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 34(4):375–401. doi: [10.1111/j.1468-5914.2004.00255.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5914.2004.00255.x).

Further

Naumescu, Vlad, and Natalie Sebanz. 2018. Embodied Cognition. In *International Encyclopedia of Anthropology*, edited by H. Callan: Wiley-Blackwell.

Downey, Greg. 2010. "Practice without theory: a neuroanthropological perspective on embodied learning." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 16:S22-S40. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9655.2010.01608.x

Clark, Andy. 2008. *Supersizing the mind: Embodiment, action, and cognitive extension*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Marchand, T. H. J. 2010. Embodied cognition and communication: studies with British fine woodworkers. *JRAI (N.S.)*, 16, S100–S120.

Lave, Jean, and Etienne Wenger. 1991. *Situated learning : legitimate peripheral participation, Learning in doing*. Cambridge [England] ; New York: Cambridge University Press.

Week 9 (Nov. 16). Distributed cognition (Guest speaker – Mathieu Charbonneau)

Cognition is often organised in systems that include 'cognitive tools' and several individuals. We will analyse some of these systems. In this session, we will reflect on the social and psychological process at work in constituting systems of distributed cognition. It will be the occasion to:

1. go back to the human mind as holding and producing representations that construct and maintain distributed cognitive system
2. rethink functionalism in the social sciences as explaining social institutions

Readings:

Hutchins, E. 2013. The cultural ecosystem of human cognition. *Philosophical Psychology*.

Further Readings:

Hutchins, E., 1995. Chapter 9. Cognition in the Wild (No. 1995). MIT press. pp. 353--75

Charbonneau, Mathieu. 2013. "The Cognitive Life of Mechanical Molecular Models." *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part C: Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences* 44 (4, Part A): 585–94. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.shpsc.2013.06.007>.

Lave, J., 1988. Chapter 5. Cognition in practice: Mind, mathematics and culture in everyday life. Cambridge University Press. pp. 97-123.

Heintz, C., 2007. Institutions as mechanisms of cultural evolution: Prospects of the epidemiological approach. *Biological Theory*, 2(3), pp.244-249.

Part 4. Methodological Issues and Insights for studying Cognition and Culture

Week 10. (Nov. 23) Methodological Pluralism and Limitations (Guest Speaker – Rita Astuti)

Questions addressed:

- How can methods from anthropology and cognitive science be combined, for fruitful research?
- Shared topics of interest and inquiry between cognitive and the social sciences
- What are the limitations of employing experiments on the field?

Readings:

Astuti, Rita. "On Keeping up the Tension between Fieldwork and Ethnography." *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 7, no. 1 (March 2017): 9–14. <https://doi.org/10.14318/hau7.1.003>.

Heintz, C., Charbonneau, M., & Fogelman, J. (2019). Integration and the Disunity of the Social Sciences. *Contemporary Philosophy and Social Science: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue*, 11.

Deb, A., & Knežević, A. (2020). Towards Methodological Pluralism in Psychological Sciences. *Encyclopedia of Evolutionary Psychological Sciences*.

Lamont, Michèle, and Ann Swidler. "Methodological Pluralism and the Possibilities and Limits of Interviewing." *Qualitative Sociology* 37, no. 2 (June 2014): 153–71. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11133-014-9274-z>.

Miton, H., Claidière, N., & Mercier, H. (2015). Universal cognitive mechanisms explain the cultural success of bloodletting. *Evolution and Human Behavior*, 36(4), 303-312.

Week 11 (Nov. 30). Attitudes towards Inequality and Fairness (Guest Speaker – Daniel Nettle)

How are inequalities perceived by the mind and what are the moral connotations of such perceptions? Various situational and environmental factors can affect our moral judgements, providing flexible notions of inequalities and fairness across cultures. What methodological tools can be used to study such complex, abstract phenomena?

Readings:

Nettle, D., & Saxe, R. (2021). 'If Men Were Angels, No Government Would Be Necessary': The Intuitive Theory of Social Motivation and Preference for Authoritarian Leaders. *Collabra: Psychology*, 7(1), 28105.

Nettle, D., & Saxe, R. (2020). Preferences for redistribution are sensitive to perceived luck, social homogeneity, war and scarcity. *Cognition*, 198.

Further Readings:

Janmaat, Jan Germen. 2013. "Subjective Inequality: A Review of International Comparative Studies on People's Views about Inequality." *European Journal of Sociology / Archives Européennes de Sociologie* 54 (3): 357–89. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975613000209>.

Mijs, Jonathan. 2018. "Inequality Is a Problem of Inference: How People Solve the Social Puzzle of Unequal Outcomes." *Societies* 8 (3): 64. <https://doi.org/10.3390/soc8030064>.

Week 12 (Dec. 7). Open Session

Potential topics:

- *Morality, moral norms, moral judgments*
- *Cooperation and Prosocial Behaviours*
- *Integration of the social sciences by Methodological Pluralism*