

Syllabus

The origin of concepts

PhD Elective Course
Department of Cognitive Science
Central European University
Winter 2016, 2 credits

Class: Wednesdays 11:00 to 12:40, at CEU Department of Cognitive Science, Oktober u. 6, 7, room 103.

Introduction session: 11 am on Wednesday, Jan 13

Instructors: György Gergely & Mikolaj Hernik

Office hours: by appointment

Course description:

The course provides an introduction into current-day philosophically inspired cognitive developmental theory and evolutionary perspectives of the nature of human concepts and their origins. It covers the current theorizing and empirical research on the central issues of the phylogenetic and ontogenetic origins of concepts and the nature of the human mind's ability for conceptual change. The core reading for the course will be the book by Susan Carey entitled "The origin of concepts" (OUP, 2009). The in-depth reading and discussion of this representative book and some additional papers will cover the comparative analysis of the nature of processes of conceptual change, reorganization, and theory construction in cognitive development on the one hand, and in history of science, on the other.

Learning Outcomes:

At the end of the course, students should be able to assess how research on cognitive development informs theories of conceptual thought.

Evaluation:

Participation in class discussion (20%) Leading a discussion (30%) End-of-term essay (50%), deadline for submission: April 11, 2015.

Schedule:

Jan 20

Chapter 1: Some Preliminaries (pp. 3-26)

Chapter 2: The Initial Representational Repertoire: The Empiricist Picture
(pp. 27-66)

Jan 27

Chapter 3: Core Object Cognition (pp. 67-116)

Feb 03

Chapter 4: Core Cognition: Number (pp. 117-156)

Feb 10

Chapter 5: Core Cognition: Agency (pp. 157-214)

Feb 17

Chapter 6: Representations of Cause (pp. 215-246)

Feb 24

Chapter 7: Language and Core Cognition (pp. 247-286)

Mar 02

Chapter 8: Beyond Core Cognition: Natural Number (pp. 287-334)

Mar 09

Chapter 9: Beyond the Numeral List Representation of Integers (pp. 335-360)

Mar 16

Chapter 10: Beyond Core Object Cognition (pp. 361-412)

Mar 23

Chapter 11: The Process of Conceptual Change (pp. 413-446)

Mar 30

Chapter 12: Conclusion I: The Origins of Concepts (pp. 447-486)

Chapter 13: Conclusion II: Implications for a Theory of Concepts (pp. 487-
538)