

## **PSY First-Year Foundations Seminar Descriptions 2023-24**

### **PSY 195F – The Science of Babies and Children (A. Finn)**

When you reach a certain age, it's thought that you are no longer able to learn certain things. This can be referred to as a critical, sensitive, or optimal period. We seek to better understand these critical periods by exploring instances in which infants or children are able to learn or perform better than adults. We will investigate these cases and discuss the roles of brain plasticity and various aspects of brain and cognitive development. Students will learn about mechanisms of brain plasticity and explore original research on critical periods and age-related limits on learning. ***Mondays 11 a.m. – 1 p.m. in the Fall***

### **PSY 195S – The Science of Babies and Children (J. Sommerville)**

Up until roughly 4 decades ago, infants were seen as cute, clueless creatures. In fact, it was William James who claimed that infants entered the world in a state of “blooming, buzzing confusion”. Yet, research from a range of fields has led to a radical consideration of this claim; infants may be cute, but they are not clueless! In this class, we will consider and discuss the science of babies. In particular, we will take a second look at long held beliefs about the nature of infants and their knowledge. Indeed, we will learn that studying infants’ perception, cognition and behaviour can offer us critical insights into long-standing philosophical questions. The class will require reading of scientific articles and book chapters as well as analyzing popular press and media depictions of infants. The only prerequisite is a curious and critical mind. The course puts great emphasis on writing and on starting to read primary scientific literature. ***Tuesdays 1 – 3 p.m. in the Winter***

### **PSY 198S – The Psychology of Magic (D. Bernhardt-Walther)**

Magicians entertain us with their tricks. What appears as “Magic” is based on fundamental aspects of human psychology: visual and auditory perception, decision making, logic, memory, and verbal abilities. In this class, we will consider and discuss the psychological basis of magic tricks and use magic to explore aspects of psychology. The class will require reading of scientific articles and book chapters as well as watching and analyzing magical tricks. The only prerequisite is a curious and critical mind. The course puts great emphasis on writing and on starting to read primary scientific literature. ***Mondays 11 a.m. – 1 p.m. in the Winter***