



PSY First-Year Foundations Seminar Descriptions 2025-26

PSY 197H1F – *Rethinking the Human Mind: The Extended Mind*

The remarkable achievements of the human mind rest upon our ability to fashion powerful tools for thought, perception, and action. The transformative effects of spoken and written language, the revelations of the microscope and telescope, the revolutionary impact of mobile information and communication technologies, and the neural and sensory prostheses of today and tomorrow remind us that cultural innovation has greatly expanded the capabilities of our brains and bodies. This course examines how we think, feel, act, and relate to each other through “extended minds.” Topics include the central importance of language and representation in our lives, how we use our bodies to think, social learning and collaboration, the extended self, technology and thought, and the ethical challenges of the 21st-century extended mind. The main goal of the course is to foster a deeper understanding of how “mind” is much more than just what happens inside the skull. A full appreciation of what is distinctive about human psychology requires awareness of the complex interplay of our bodies, technologies, cultural practices, and physical environments. More generally, this seminar course will help students develop their scientific literacy, ability for critical thinking and self-reflection, and speaking and writing skills. The course is restricted to first-year students, and is not eligible for CR/NCR option.

Dr. Romin Tafarodi

Tuesdays 1 – 3 p.m. (Fall)

PSY 195H1S – *The Science of Babies and Children*

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.

Dr. Jessica Sommerville

Tuesdays 1 – 3 p.m. (Winter)

PSY 197H1S – *Rethinking the Human Mind: Rationality*

Have you ever made a decision you later regretted? Held onto a belief despite contradictory evidence? Fallen victim to flawed logic or hidden biases? If so, you're far from alone. As humans, we often struggle to think rationally about complex issues. This course explores how we get things right—how we overcome the various biases, prejudices, and fallacies that get in our way. Topics will include the evolution of intelligence, the complex interplay of deliberation and snap judgment, the role of rationality in ethical decision-making, how we deal with controversial political, social, and religious issues, and the debate over the capacities of generative AI. Readings will draw from many disciplines, including psychology, evolutionary theory, and political science. Weekly reading responses will be required. This is not a lecture course—participants will be required to actively engage in discussion and debate. The course is restricted to first-year students, and is not eligible for CR/NCR option.

Dr. Paul Bloom

Tuesdays 11 a.m. – 1 p.m. (Winter)