

Conscious Will

What makes us feel that we are consciously willing our actions? Is this feeling a true indication of how our actions are caused? Or is it an interpretation, a way the mind has of keeping track of what it thinks it may have done? This course examines the second possibility—that the experience of consciously willing actions comes from the mind's efforts to understand its own authorship. It turns out that this idea leads to new approaches to classic questions of free will vs. determinism and mind vs. body, and also helps to understand unusual phenomena of will or volition—from phantom limbs, Ouija boards, and dowsing rods to hypnosis, spirit possession, auditory hallucinations, and dissociative identity disorder. Conscious will can be approached on many levels, from the neuropsychological to the cognitive, social, and cultural, and each of these is useful in coming to an understanding of how people gain a sense of self as a conscious causal agent.

REQUIREMENTS

Comments on the Main Readings. Each week there will be one or more main readings for the class (listed first under each topic in the outline below). Your assignment is to do the readings and then turn in a page (or so) of comments on the week's readings by the Tuesday of that week. The comments should include at least 2 of these 4 elements: a summary (a few sentences summarizing the reading), an idea (the most interesting or important idea you found in the reading or had about the topic), a question (a query, comment, complaint, wish, issue for class discussion), or a personal example (something you have experienced that is relevant to the topic). This requirement accounts for 20% of your course grade.

Class Participation. Your discussion, questions, and comments in class will account for 20% of your course grade. Late arrival and/or absence from class are considered lapses in participation.

Individual Reports on the Special Readings. In addition to the main readings, there are several special readings noted for each week's topic. Each member of the class will select 2 of the weekly topics and do one of the special readings those weeks. A 10-minute presentation on the special reading will be done in class on the Thursday of that week (beginning Sept. 28). Your assignment is to present the special readings clearly and creatively, and to explain how the reading relates to the week's topic. This requirement accounts for 25% of your course grade.

Research Project. A paper examining a specific topic in the psychological study of conscious will accounts for 35% of your grade. A proposal for the project (under one page) is due Oct. 28; a written project paper in APA style is due Dec. 7; and a brief presentation of your project to be given in class should be prepared for Dec. 7 as well.

OUTLINE AND READINGS

The main readings are available from the instructor. Readings labeled ICW are chapters in Wegner, D. M. (2002). *The illusion of conscious will*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. The special readings for individual reports (*) are available on file in 1472 William James Hall, and the background sources (+) are available from the library.

Sept. 21/23 Organizational Meetings

Sept. 28/30 Mind Perception

ICW, Chapter 1: The illusion

Dennett, D. C. (1996). *Kinds of minds*. New York: Basic Books. [Ch. 1: Knowing your own mind.]

*Herzog, H. A., & Galvin, S. (1997). Common sense and the mental lives of animals: An empirical approach. In R. W. Mitchell & N. S. Thompson & H. L. Miles (Eds.), *Anthropomorphism, Anecdotes, and Animals* (pp. 237-253). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

*Baron-Cohen, S., Wheelwright, S., Hill, J., Raste, Y., & Plumb, I. (2001). The "Reading the Mind in the Eyes" Test revised version: A study with normal adults, and adults with Asperger syndrome or high-functioning autism. *Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 42, 241-251.

<http://growe.homeip.net/BaronCohen/Faces/EyesTest.aspx>

*Scassellati, B. (2002). Theory of mind for a humanoid robot. *Autonomous Robots*, 12, 13-24.

*Bering, J. M. (2002). Intuitive conceptions of dead agents' minds: The natural foundations of afterlife beliefs as a phenomenological boundary. *Journal of Cognition and Culture*, 2, 263-308.

+Baron-Cohen, S. (1997). *Mindblindness: An essay on autism and theory of mind*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press/Bradford Books.

Oct. 5/7 Brain, Body, and Will

ICW, Chapter 2: Brain and will

Nicolelis, M. A. L. (2001). Actions from thoughts. *Nature*, 409, 403-407.

*Ramachandran, V. S., & Rogers-Ramachandran, D. (1996). Synaesthesia in phantom limbs induced with mirrors. *Proceedings of the Royal Society of London*, 263, 377-386.

*Lau, H. C., Rogers, R. D., Haggard, P., & Passingham, R. E. (2004). Attention to intention. *Science*, 303, 1208-1210.

*Kennedy, P., Andreason, D., Erehim, P., King, B., Kirby, T., Mau, H., & Moore, M. (2004). Using human extra-cortical local field potentials to control a switch. *Journal of Neural Engineering*, 1, 72-77.

- *Hunter, M. D., Farrow, T. F. D., Papadakis, N. G., Wilkinson, I. D., Woodruff, P. W. R., & Spence, S. A. (2003). Approaching an ecologically valid functional anatomy of spontaneous “willed” action. *NeuroImage*, 20, 1264-1269.
- +Libet, B. (1985). Unconscious cerebral initiative and the role of conscious will in voluntary action. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 8, 529_566.
- +Feinberg, T. E. (2001). *Altered egos: How the brain creates the self*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Oct. 12/14 Apparent Mental Causation

ICW, Chapter 3: The experience of will

- *Langer, E. J. (1975). The illusion of control. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 32, 311-328.
- *Wegner, D. M., Winerman, L., & Sparrow, B. (2004). Action at a distance: Experiencing control over the movements of others. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 86, 838-848.
- *Daprati, E., Franck, N., Georgieff, N., Proust, J., Pacherie, E., Dalery, J., & Jeannerod, M. (1997). Looking for the agent: An investigation into consciousness of action and self-consciousness in schizophrenic patients. *Cognition*, 65, 71-86.
- *Pronin, E., Wegner, D. M., & McCarthy, K. (2004). Everyday magical powers: The role of apparent mental causation in the overestimation of personal influence. *Unpublished manuscript*.
- *Frith, C. D., & Fletcher, P. (1995). Voices from nowhere. *Critical Quarterly*, 37, 71-83.
- +Michotte, A. (1963). *The perception of causality*. [T. R. Miles & Elaine Miles, Trans.] New York: Basic Books. (Originally published 1954)
- +Frith, C. D., Blakemore, S-J. & Wolpert, D. M. (2000). Abnormalities in the awareness and control of action. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London*, 355, 1771-1788.

Oct. 19/21 Automatism and Ideomotor Action

ICW, Chapter 4: An analysis of automatism

- *Knuf, L., Aschersleben, G., & Prinz, W. (2001). An analysis of ideomotor action. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 130, 779-798.
- *Koutstaal, W. (1992). Skirting the abyss: A history of experimental explorations of automatic writing in psychology. *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, 28, 5-27.
- *Vogt, E. Z., & Hyman, R. (1959). *Water witching U.S.A.*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- *Wegner, D. M., Ansfield, M., & Pilloff, D. (1998). The putt and the pendulum. *Psychological Science*, 9, 196-199.

- +Ansfield, M. E. & Wegner, D. M. (1996). The feeling of doing. In P. M. Gollwitzer & J. A. Bargh (Eds.), *The psychology of action: Linking cognition and motivation to behavior* (pp. 482-506). New York: Guilford.

Oct. 26/28 **Automaticity and Unconscious Processes**

- Bargh, J. A., & Chartrand, T. L. (1999). The unbearable automaticity of being. *American Psychologist*, *54*, 462-479.
- *Dijksterhuis, A. (in press). Think different: The merits of unconscious thought in preference development and decision making. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*.
- *Platek, S. M., Critton, S. R., Myers, T. E., & Gallup, G. G., Jr. (2003). *Cognitive Brain Research*, *17*, 223-227.
- *Lhermitte, F. (1983). "Utilization behaviour" and its relation to lesions of the frontal lobes. *Brain*, *106*, 237-255.
- *Chartrand, T. (2002). Mystery moods and perplexing performance: Consequences of succeeding and failing at a nonconscious goal. *Manuscript submitted for publication*.
- *Brandstatter, V., Lengfelder, A., & Gollwitzer, P. M. (2001). Implementation intentions and efficient action initiation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *81*, 946-960.
- +Bargh, J. A. (1997). The automaticity of everyday life. In Wyer, R. S. (Ed.) *Advances in Social Cognition*, Vol. 10 (pp. 1-62). Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Nov. 2/4 **Self-Perception and Interpretation**

ICW, Chapter 5: Protecting the illusion

- *Feinberg, T. E. (2001). *Altered egos: How the brain creates the self*. New York: Oxford University Press. (Chapter 4: Mything persons)
- *Beninger, R. J., Kendall, S. B., & Vanderwolf, C. H. (1974). The ability of rats to discriminate their own behaviors. *Canadian Journal of Psychology*, *28*, 79-91.
- *Wilson, T. D., & Schooler, J. W. (1991). Thinking too much: Introspection can reduce the quality of preferences and decisions. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *60*, 181-192.
- *Wegner, D. M., Vallacher, R. R., Macomber, G., Wood, R., & Arps, K. (1984). The emergence of action. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *46*, 269-279.
- +Fazio, R. H. (1987). Self-perception theory: A current perspective. In M. P. Zanna, J. M. Olson, & C. P. Herman (Eds.), *Social influence: The Ontario symposium*, Vol. 5 (pp. 129-150). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Nov. 9/16 **Action Projection and Virtual Agency**

ICW, Chapter 6: Action Projection

ICW, Chapter 7: Virtual Agency

Humphreys, N., & Dennett, D. C. (1989). Speaking for our selves. *Raritan: A Quarterly Review*, 9, 68-98.

*Graham, G., & Stephens, G. L. (1994). Mind and mine. In G. Graham & G. L. Stephens (Eds.), *Philosophical psychology* (pp. 91-109). Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press.

*Blakemore, S. J., Wolpert, D. M., & Frith, C. D. (1998). Central cancellation of self-produced tickle sensation. *Nature Neuroscience*, 1, 635-640.

*Spanos, N. P., Cross, W. P., Lepage, M., & Coristine, M. (1986). Glossolalia as learned behavior: An experimental demonstration. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 95, 21-23.

*Noyes, R., & Kletti, R. (1976). Depersonalization in the face of life-threatening danger: A description. *Psychiatry*, 39, 19-27.

*Neher, A. (1962). A physiological explanation of unusual behavior in ceremonies involving drums. *Human Biology*, 4, 151-160.

+Brown, M. F. (1997). *The channeling zone*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University press.

+Acocella, J. (1999). *Creating hysteria: Women and multiple personality disorder*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

+Twachtman-Cullen, D. (1997). *A passion to believe: Autism and the facilitated communication phenomenon*. Boulder, CO: Westview.

Nov. 18/23 **Hypnosis**

ICW, Chapter 8: Hypnosis and Will

*Nash, M. (1987). What, if anything, is regressed about hypnotic age regression? A review of the empirical literature. *Psychological Bulletin*, 102(1), 42-52.

*Newman, L. S., & Baumeister, R. F. (1996). Toward an explanation of the UFO abduction phenomenon: Hypnotic elaboration, extraterrestrial sadomasochism, and spurious memories. *Psychological Inquiry*, 7, 99-126.

*Cox, R. E., & Barnier, A. (2004). Posthypnotic amnesia for a first romantic relationship: Forgetting the entire relationship versus forgetting selected events. *Manuscript submitted for publication*.

*Wegner, D. M., & Erskine, J. (2003). Voluntary involuntariness: Thought suppression and the regulation of the experience of will. *Consciousness and Cognition*, 12, 684-694.

*Raz, A., Shapiro, T., Fan, J., & Posner, M. I. (2002). Hypnotic suggestion and the modulation of Stroop interference. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 59, 1155-1161.

- *Kihlstrom, J. F. (1994). One hundred years of hysteria. In S. J. Lynn & J. W. Rhue (Eds.), *Dissociation: Clinical and theoretical perspectives* (pp. 365-394). New York: Guilford.
- *Halligan, P. W., Athwal, B. S., Oakley, D. W., Frackowiak, R. S. J. (2000). Imaging hypnotic paralysis: Implications for conversion hysteria. *Lancet*, 355, 986-987.
- +Hilgard, E. R. (1986). *Divided consciousness: Multiple controls in human thought and action*. New York: Wiley-Interscience.
- +Lynn, S. J., Rhue, J. W., & Weekes, J. R. (1990). Hypnotic involuntariness: A social cognitive analysis. *Psychological Review*, 97, 169-184.

Nov. 30/Dec. 2 Why is There Will?

ICW, Chapter 9: The Mind's Compass

Wegner, D. M. (in press). Frequently asked questions about conscious will. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*.

- *Miller, A. G., Gordon, A. K., & Buddie, A. M. (1999). Accounting for evil and cruelty: Is to explain to condone? *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 3, 254-268.
- *Denno, D. (2003). A mind to blame: New views on involuntary acts. *Behavioral Sciences and the Law*, 21, 601-618.
- *Feeney, F. (1986). Robbers as decision-makers. In D. B. Cornish & R. V. Clarke (Eds.). *The reasoning criminal: Rational choice perspectives on offending* (pp. 53-71). New York: Springer-Verlag.
- *Galinsky, A. D., Gruenfeld, D. H., & Magee, J. C. (in press). From power to action. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*.
- *Breer, P. (1989). *The spontaneous self: Viable alternatives to free will*. Cambridge, MA: Institute for Naturalistic Philosophy.
- +Dennett, D. C. (1984). *Elbow room: The varieties of free will worth wanting*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- +Baars, B. J. (1993). Why volition is a foundation problem for psychology. *Consciousness and Cognition*, 2, 281-309.

Dec. 7/14/16/21 Project Presentations