Remarque

Cognitive Psychology in the "Nature - Nurture" Debate

Summary

Are our cognitive functions (e.g. perception, language) due to nature or nurture? While extreme positions are today less prevalent, the debate is ongoing. We will discuss empirical findings supporting either position, inviting students to critically assess and integrate various positions.

Content

This active participation course will extend (but not depend) on a course in year BA3, in which basic knowledge on cognitive psychology was introduced (HUM-213). First, we will introduce (or remind) students of the basic fields in cognitive psychology and how the nature (biological innateness) vs nurture (social experience) debate has evolved in theoretical viewpoints throughout history. Then, students will choose a topic (e.g., intelligence, learning, memory, language, emotion, temperament) and present empirical evidence that supports either perspective (nature and nurture) in order to compare viewpoints, discuss, integrate, and synthesize conflicting findings.

Keywords

cognition, nature, nurture, development, methods, history, theory, intelligence, learning, memory, language, emotion, temperament

Learning Prerequisites

Recommended courses

HUM - 213: Psychologie cognitive A, but not necessary

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, the student must be able to:

• Select appropriately a topic
• Identify relevant publications
• Present empirical evidence
• Compare opposing views
• Demonstrate the ability to integrate different/opposing viewpoints
• Justify a constructive synthesis of the treated literature
• Discuss research articles within a larger context
• Formulate reasoning in oral and written form
• Promote group discussion

Transversal skills
• Assess progress against the plan, and adapt the plan as appropriate.
• Plan and carry out activities in a way which makes optimal use of available time and other resources.
• Assess one’s own level of skill acquisition, and plan their on-going learning goals.
• Take feedback (critique) and respond in an appropriate manner.
• Access and evaluate appropriate sources of information.
• Summarize an article or a technical report.
• Give feedback (critique) in an appropriate fashion.
• Demonstrate the capacity for critical thinking
• Make an oral presentation.

Teaching methods
Course of up to 70-80 minutes
Followed by a discussion period in which the lecturers are present to support students
- in their preparation of the oral presentation
- in their preparation of the course summary
- in their literature search

Expected student activities
• Present and discuss your analysis of the contradicting literature
• Write summaries (max. 1 page each) of presentations given by your peers.
• Contribute constructively to the discussion and outcome of the other presenters.

Assessment methods
• Evaluation of the oral presentation
• Evaluation of summaries on oral presentations.

Supervision
Office hours No
Assistants Yes
Forum No
Others Students can ask questions and obtain further information before and after lecture times. In case of particular questions, additional office time can be arranged.

Resources
Bibliography
to be provided in the course.

Notes/Handbook
to be provided on the lecture slides being made available on moodle.

Videos
• http://to be provided on moodle