

COURSE SPECIFICATION DOCUMENT

Academic School / Department:	Psychology
Programme:	Psychology
RQF Level:	3
Course Title:	Psychological Debates & Controversies
Course Code:	PSY 3101
Student Engagement Hours:	120
Lectures:	30
Seminar/Tutorials/Lab:	15
Independent / Guided Learning:	75
Credits:	12 UK CATS credits 6 ECTS credits 3 US credits

Course Description:

'Psychological Debates & Controversies' introduces students to foundational, core and contemporary debates in psychology and how these big questions impact psychological research and scientific progress. Students will learn about theoretical debates such as the Nature-vs-Nurture, Idiographic-vs-Nomothetic, Reductionism-vs-Holism and Determinism-vs-Free Will; additionally, modern controversies such as Essentialism and Social Constructionism; also, the arguments around how psychology is used regarding the economic impact of psychology research and Applied-vs-Theoretical psychology; and the unexpected prevalence of Race, Culture, Sex & Gender bias in Psychology. The course will also teach students how to articulate psychological arguments based on primary research and the basics of APA-style and referencing.

Prerequisites:

N/A

Aims and Objectives:

The aim of this course is for students to understand the different debates, controversies, ideas and biases that contextualise the landscape of psychological research. The course will integrate historical and current debates taking place in psychology and offer students the opportunity to conduct critical research and argue as to whether primary research evidence suggests a given debate is credible over another. Moreover, students will consider how different research biases impact not only research findings, but the credibility of psychology, and consider how best to address these scientific shortcomings and controversies.

Programme Outcomes:

Psychology: 3A.i, 3B.i, 3C.i, 3D.i

A detailed list of the programme outcomes is found in the Programme Specification.

This is located at the archive maintained by Registry and found at:

<https://www.richmond.ac.uk/programme-and-course-specifications/>

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this course, successful students should be able to:

- Explain the debates of the Mind-Body problem; the Nature-vs-Nature; Reductionism-vs-Holism; Determinism-vs-Free Will; Idiographic-vs-Nomothetic approaches; Essentialism-vs-Social Constructionism; and Quantitative-vs-Qualitative Data Collection.
- Outline the psychological research and professional effects of Race, Culture, Sex and Gender Bias.
- Describe the real-world issues psychology has with the political and economic impacts of psychological research; ethical implications of psychology research regarding social sensitivities, and the issue of credibility for psychology as a social science and psychologists.
- Articulate an argument based on primary research assessing two (or more) sides of an issue and concluding on the value of a side/debate.

Indicative Content:

- The Baron-Cohen—Fine Debate
- The Bell Curve & Race in Psychology
- The Rogers—Skinner Debate
- Francis Galton and the issues of Eugenics

Assessment:

This course conforms to the University Assessment Norms approved at Academic Board and located at: <https://www.richmond.ac.uk/university-policies/>

Teaching Methodology:

- I. Formal Lectures
- II. Debates and Discussions of Key Ideas
- III. Recommended Readings
- IV. Videos & Films
- V. Research Seminars

Indicative Text(s):

- Fairholm, I. (2012). *Issues, Debates and Approaches in Psychology*. Macmillan.
- Gross, R. (2014). *Themes, Issues and Debates in Psychology*. Hodder Education.

Web Sites

www.bps.org.uk

See syllabus for complete reading list

Change Log for this CSD:

Nature of Change	Date Approved & Approval Body (School or AB)	Change Actioned by Registry Services
Revision – annual update	May 2023	