

## PSY410H5F

# The development of epistemic trust and skepticism in early childhood

Delivery Method: **IN-PERSON**

Schedule: **TU 9:00am – 12:00pm**

Room Location: **MN3160 (Maanjiwe Nendamowinan)**

### Contact Information

**Course Instructor:**

**Dr. Samuel Ronfard**

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**Teaching Assistant:**

**Tiana Simovic**

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**Office Hours:** In person, Fridays 2 to 3 pm. Over zoom, upon special request at the same time.

**Office Location:** CCT 4059

### Course Description

- This course will provide an in-depth examination of current issues and hot topics in developmental psychology. Readings will provide historical and theoretical background as well as highlight current and significant research in a number of topic areas. This course is a seminar class. As such, you are expected to attend every class and to participate actively in class discussions.
- This year's special topic is *Trust & Imagination*. The purpose of this course is to critically examine two somewhat conflicting views about early cognitive development, namely that young children: (i) are little scientists who construct their own ideas about the world based on their own first-hand observation and exploration; and (ii) have a rich fantasy life as shown by their capacity for make-believe play and delight in magic and fairy tales. We will examine two alternative proposals, namely that young children: (i) rather than being little scientists, are credulous pupils who are receptive to ideas about reality supplied by other people; (ii) have an imagination inspired by everyday reality rather than fantastical possibilities.

### Learning Outcome

*By the end of this course, students should be able to;*

- **Identify** and **distinguish** contrasting theoretical proposals about young children's trust and imagination.
- **Describe** and **analyse** experiments designed to assess children's developing cognitive abilities.
- Use scientific sources to critically **evaluate** claims about the cognitive abilities of young children.
- **Design** an experiment and **explain** the logic of that experiment (how it can adjudicate between two competing hypotheses).

## Reading Material

Readings for this course include journal articles, book chapters, and theoretical papers. These documents will be available for download on the Quercus page. The core reading material for each week is listed at the end of this document. Please note that this reading list is subject to change. Always check Quercus for the most up to date reading list.

## Course Evaluation

**Response papers** (250 to 500 words) prior to weekly discussion:  $9 * 5\% = 45\%$

- The readings for each week are accompanied by a guiding question. Answering this question requires you to read and synthesize the readings for that week. *Before each class*, you need to submit your response to the guiding question. Your response must be between 250 and 500 words. In this response you need to back up your claims using evidence from your readings and use APA formatting to cite that evidence. There are nine topics we will cover in class so you will have to submit 9 short papers. I will provide an example of an exemplary response during the first class.

**Presentation of readings: 15%**

- For each topic, two or three students will be invited to initiate the discussion by taking 25 to 35 minutes to review and comment on the readings for that topic. This presentation should provide a quick summary and analysis of the readings and raise questions for discussion. During the first class, I will model what I consider to be a model presentation. You will be randomly assigned to a group and topic on the first day of class.

**Experiment design: 10%** (10% for write up following the presentation)

- On October 5<sup>th</sup>, you will present an idea for your experiment to the class. These 5-minute presentations will require you to provide background, a research question, alternative hypotheses, the logic of the experiment, and details on the methods and analyses. You will receive feedback from your peers and from the teaching team. You will then use this feedback to refine your idea for the experiment and submit these the following week..

**Term paper: 30%**

- For the term paper, you can choose 1 of the 2 topics below and drawing on the course readings answer that questions in about 6-8 pages (Times New Roman, Double Spaced). I will not read anything past 8 pages. The page limit does not include a title page and the APA reference section.
  - **Topic 1:** Do you think that children (a) are little scientists who construct their own ideas about the world based on their own first-hand observation and exploration or (b) credulous pupils who are receptive to ideas about reality supplied by other people?
  - **Topic 2:** Do you think that children (a) have a rich fantasy life as shown by their capacity for make-believe play and delight in magic and fairy tales or (b) have an imagination inspired by everyday reality rather than fantastical possibilities.

## Course Webpage

The website associated with this course is accessible via <http://q.utoronto.ca>

**Note:** You don't need to create a new login for Canvas; it already knows who you are. You just need your UTORid and password. This is the same login that gets you onto the wireless network with your laptop, and the same one that you use to check your email. If you're confused about your UTORid or don't remember your password, go to: <https://www.utorid.utoronto.ca/>

In order to access course material, monitor course information, and view your grades you must log into Canvas. If you have any general questions regarding Canvas, please visit the following help site:  
<https://library.utm.utoronto.ca/faculty/canvas>

## IMPORTANT COURSE POLICIES \*\*PLEASE READ\*\*

### **Extension of Time Special Consideration Request Process**

Students who seek to be granted more time to complete their term work beyond the due date without penalty, owing to circumstances beyond their control (e.g., illness, or an accident), must do so by submitting a request **directly to the Instructor** for the period up to and including the last day of the term. The decision as to whether or not to apply a penalty for the specified period rests with the Instructor.

Students who seek to be granted more time to complete term work beyond the last day of the term must submit their request directly to the Department. This request covers the period following the last day of classes and ends the last day of the exam period. This is done by submitting a request via the online Special Consideration Request form at <https://utmapp.utm.utoronto.ca/SpecialRequest>. You are advised to seek advising by the departmental Undergraduate Counsellor prior to the deadline.

### **Supporting Documentation**

The University is temporarily suspending the need for a doctor's note or medical certificate for any absence from academic participation. However, you are required to use the Absence Declaration tool on ACORN found in the Profile and Settings menu to formally declare an absence from academic participation. The tool is to be used if you require consideration for missed academic work based on the procedures specific to our campus/department.

### **Missed Final Exam or Extension of Time beyond exam period**

Missed final exams or for extensions of time beyond the examination period you must submit a petition through the Office of the Registrar. <http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/registrar/current-students/petitions> and follow their procedures.

### **Penalties for Lateness**

A penalty of 10% per calendar day (i.e., including week-ends and holidays, during which students are not able to submit term work) up to and including the last day of classes, will be applied by the Instructor. After the last day of classes, the penalty of 10% per calendar day will be applied by the Undergraduate Counsellor on behalf of the Department. No penalty will be assigned if request for special consideration, described above, was successful.

## **Academic Guidelines**

It is your responsibility to ensure that you have met all prerequisites listed in the UTM Calendar for this course. If you lack any prerequisites you WILL BE REMOVED from the course up until the last day to add a course. Further information about academic regulations, course withdrawal dates and credits can be found in the University of Toronto Mississauga Calendar at: <http://www.erin.utoronto.ca/regcal/>.

You are encouraged to read this material. If you run into trouble and need advice about studying, preparing for exams, note taking or time management, free workshops and advice are available from the Robert Gillespie Academic Skills Centre at 905-828-5406.

## **AccessAbility Services**

The University provides academic accommodations for students with disabilities in accordance with the terms of the Ontario Human Rights Code. This occurs through a collaborative process that acknowledges a collective obligation to develop an accessible learning environment that both meets the needs of students and preserves the essential academic requirements of the University's courses and programs. Students requiring academic accommodations for learning, physical, sensory, or mental health disabilities or medical conditions should contact the AccessAbility Office (2037B Davis Building), 905-828-3847.

<http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/accessibility/>

## **Privacy and Copyright Disclaimer**

### ***Notice of video recording and sharing (Download and re-use prohibited)***

This course, including your participation, will be recorded on video and will be available to students in the course for viewing remotely and after each session. Course videos and materials belong to your instructor, the University, and/or other sources depending on the specific facts of each situation, and are protected by copyright. Do not download, copy, or share any course or student materials or videos without the explicit permission of the instructor. For questions about recording and use of videos in which you appear please contact your instructor.

Lectures and course materials prepared by the instructor are considered by the University to be an instructor's intellectual property covered by the Copyright Act, RSC 1985, c C-42. Course materials such as PowerPoint slides and lecture recordings are made available to you for your own study purposes. These materials cannot be shared outside of the class or "published" in any way. Posting recordings or slides to other websites without the express permission of the instructor will constitute copyright infringement.

## **Academic Honesty and Plagiarism**

Academic integrity is essential to the pursuit of learning and scholarship in a university, and to ensuring that a degree from the University of Toronto Mississauga is a strong signal of each student's individual academic achievement. As a result, UTM treats cases of cheating and plagiarism very seriously.

The University of Toronto's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters outlines behaviours that constitute academic dishonesty and the process for addressing academic offences. Potential offences include, but are not limited to:

### **In papers and assignments:**

1. Using someone else's ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement.
2. Submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor.

3. Making up sources or facts.
4. Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment.

#### On tests and exams:

1. Using or possessing unauthorized aids.
2. Looking at someone else's answers during an exam or test.
3. Misrepresenting your identity.

#### In academic work:

1. Falsifying institutional documents or grades.
2. Falsifying or altering any documentation required, including (but not limited to) doctor's notes.

With regard to remote learning and online courses, UTM wishes to remind students that they are expected to adhere to **the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters** regardless of the course delivery method. By offering students the opportunity to learn remotely, UTM expects that students will maintain the same academic honesty and integrity that they would in a classroom setting. Potential academic offences in a digital context include, but are not limited to:

#### Remote assessments:

1. Accessing unauthorized resources (search engines, chat rooms, Reddit, etc.) for assessments.
2. Using technological aids (e.g. software) beyond what is listed as permitted in an assessment.
3. Posting test, essay, or exam questions to message boards or social media.
4. Creating, accessing, and sharing assessment questions and answers in virtual "course groups."
5. Working collaboratively, in-person or online, with others on assessments that are expected to be completed individually.

All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following procedures outlined in the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters. If you have questions or concerns about what constitutes appropriate academic behaviour or appropriate research and citation methods, you are expected to seek out additional information on academic integrity from your instructor or from other institutional resources.

#### **Academic Rights**

You, as a student at UTM, have the right to:

- Receive a syllabus by the first day of class.
- Rely upon a syllabus once a course is started. An instructor may only change marks' assignments by following the University Assessment and Grading Practices Policy provision 1.3.
- Refuse to use turnitin.com (you must be offered an alternative form of submission).
- Have access to your instructor for consultation during a course or follow up with the department chair if the instructor is unavailable.
- Ask the person who marked your term work for a re-evaluation if you feel it was not fairly graded. You have up to one month from the date of return of the item to inquire about the mark. If you are not satisfied with a re-evaluation, you may appeal to the instructor in charge of the course if the instructor did not mark the work. If your work is remarked, you must accept the resulting mark. You may only

appeal a mark beyond the instructor if the term work was worth at least 20% of the course mark.

- Receive at least one significant mark (15% for H courses, 25% for Y courses) before the last day you can drop a course for H courses, and the last day of classes in the first week of January for Y courses taught in the Fall/Winter terms.
- Submit handwritten essays so long as they are neatly written.
- Have no assignment worth 100% of your final grade.
- Not have a term test worth more than 25% in the last two weeks of class.
- Retain intellectual property rights to your research.
- Receive all your assignments once graded.
- View your final exams. To see a final exam, you must submit an online Exam Reproduction Request within 6 months of the exam. There is a small non-refundable fee.
- Privacy of your final grades.
- Arrange for representation from Downtown Legal Services (DLS), a representative from the UTM Students' Union (UTMSU), and/or other forms of support if you are charged with an academic offence.

### **Equity Statement**

The University of Toronto is committed to equity and respect for diversity. All members of the learning environment in this course should strive to create an atmosphere of mutual respect. As a course instructor, I will neither condone nor tolerate behaviour that undermines the dignity or self-esteem of any individual in this course and wish to be alerted to any attempt to create an intimidating or hostile environment. It is our collective responsibility to create a space that is inclusive and welcomes discussion. Discrimination, harassment and hate speech will not be tolerated. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns you may contact the UTM Equity and Diversity officer at [edo.utm@utoronto.ca](mailto:edo.utm@utoronto.ca) or the University of Toronto Mississauga Students' Union Vice President Equity at [vpequity@utmsu.ca](mailto:vpequity@utmsu.ca).

### **Course Outline**

***Please note that this outline is subject to change depending on the needs of the class (we may need additional time to cover a topic). Any changes to the syllabus will be announced in class one week before.***

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Question</b>	<b>Assignment Due</b>
September 13	<b>Learning from testimony</b>	Do children trust what other people have told them or do they rely primarily on what they have observed for themselves?	
September 20	<b>Children's questions</b>	What do children learn from the questions that they ask?	Response Paper
September 27	<b>Selective trust</b>	When and why do children not learn from accurate and reliable informants?	Response Paper
October 4	<b>Experiment Design Presentation</b>		Experiment Design Presentation
October 11	<b>READING WEEK - NO LECTURE</b>		
October 18	<b>Knowing what is real</b>	Children and adults tend to have fewer doubts about the existence of invisible scientific phenomena (e.g., viruses) than invisible religious phenomena (e.g., the soul). Why the difference?	Response Paper Experiment Description
October 25	<b>Belief in the afterlife</b>	Why do many children and adults believe that there is life after death?	Response Paper
November 1	<b>The development of the imagination</b>	Is there any evidence that children's imagination is dulled by schooling as they get older?	Response Paper
November 8	<b>Early make-believe</b>	Why do young children engage in pretend role-play and invent imaginary companions? What are the benefits?	Response Paper
November 15	<b>Figuring out what could actually happen</b>	Are young children too conservative or too fanciful in judging what could actually happen? Why?	Response Paper
November 22	<b>Imitation</b>	Why do young children imitate so faithfully?	Response Paper
November 29	<b>Innovation</b>	Why do young children innovate so rarely?	Response Paper
December 6	<b>Writing Workshop</b>		FINAL PAPER (DUE December 7th midnight)

**NOTE: This is a tentative outline and is subject to change based on the progress of the course.**

You will find it useful to buy a copy of this book: Harris, P.L. (2012). *Trusting what you're told*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press/Harvard University Press. A paperback edition is available. References below to: Harris, P.L. (2012) (marked B) concern chapters in this book. PDF copies of these chapters will also be provided on the course website.

Please note that this reading list is subject to change. Always check Quercus for the most up to date reading list.

### **September 13<sup>th</sup>: Learning from testimony**

**Question**: Do children trust what other people have told them or do they rely primarily on what they have observed for themselves?

Harris, P.L. & Koenig, M. (2006). Trust in testimony: How children learn about science and religion. *Child Development, 77*, 505-524.

Callanan, M. A. (2006). Cognitive development, culture, and conversation: comments on Harris and Koenig's "Truth in testimony: how children learn about science and religion". *Child Development, 77*, 525-530.

Gelman, S. A. (2009). Learning from others: Children's construction of concepts. *Annual Review of Psychology, 60*, 115-140.

### **September 20<sup>th</sup>: Children's questions.**

**Question**: What do children learn from the questions that they ask?

Tizard, B. & Hughes, M. (1984). *Young children learning*. London: Fontana. Chapter 5 (pp. 102-132). The puzzling mind of the 4-year-old.

Frazier, B. N., Gelman, S. A. & Wellman, H. M. (2009). Preschoolers' search for explanatory information within adult-child conversation. *Child Development, 80*, 1592-1611.

Sak. R. (2020). Preschoolers' difficult questions and their teachers' responses. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 48*, 59-70.

### **September 27<sup>th</sup>: Selective Trust**

**Question**: When and why do children not learn from accurate and reliable informants?

Harris, P.L. (2012). Chapter 5: Trusting those you know + Chapter 6: Consensus and dissent.

Jaswal, V.K. & Konrad, R.L. (2016). Why children are not always epistemically vigilant: Cognitive limits and social considerations. *Child Development Perspectives, 10*, 240-244.



Lane, J. D. (2018). Children's belief in counterintuitive and counterperceptual messages. *Child Development Perspectives*, 12, 247-252.

### **October 4<sup>th</sup>: Knowing what is real**

**Question:** Children and adults tend to have fewer doubts about the existence of invisible scientific phenomena (e.g., viruses) than invisible religious phenomena (e.g., the soul). Why the difference?

Harris, P.L. (2012). Chapter 8: Knowing what is real.

McLoughlin, N., Jacob, C., Samrow, P., & Corriveau, K. H. (2021). Beliefs about unobservable scientific and religious entities are transmitted via subtle linguistic cues in parental testimony. *Journal of Cognition and Development*, 1-19.

Van Leeuwen, N., Weisman, K., & Luhrmann, T. M. (2021). To Believe is Not to Think: A Cross-Cultural Finding. *Open Mind*, 1-9.

Harris, P.L. & Corriveau, K.H. (2020). Beliefs of children and adults in religious and scientific phenomena. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 40, 20-23.

### **October 18<sup>th</sup>: Student Presentation of Experiment Design**

### **October 25<sup>th</sup>: Belief in the afterlife**

**Question:** Why do many children and adults believe that there is life after death?

Harris, P.L. (2012). Chapter 9: Death and the afterlife.

Harris, P.L. (2018). Children's understanding of death: From biology to religion. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B*, 373: 20170266.

Menendez, D., Hernandez, I. G., & Rosengren, K. S. (2020). Children's emerging understanding of death. *Child Development Perspectives*, 14(1), 55-60.

### **November 1<sup>st</sup>: The development of the imagination**

**Question:** Is there any evidence that children's imagination is dulled by schooling as they get older?

Harris, P. L. (2021). Early constraints on the imagination: The realism of young children. *Child Development*, 92, 466-483.

Harris, P. L. (2020). Can young children draw what does not exist? *Empirical Studies of the Arts*, 38, 71-80.

Ted talk by Sir Ken Robinson:

[https://www.ted.com/talks/sir\\_ken\\_robinson\\_do\\_schools\\_kill\\_creativity?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/sir_ken_robinson_do_schools_kill_creativity?language=en)

### **November 8<sup>th</sup>: Early make-believe**

**Question**: Why do young children engage in pretend role-play and invent imaginary companions? What are the benefits?

Harris, P. L. (2000). The work of the imagination. Chapter 3: Role play.

Lillard, A. S., Lerner, M. D., Hopkins, E. J., Dore, R. A., Smith, E. D., & Palmquist, C. M. (2013). The impact of pretend play on children's development: a review of the evidence. *Psychological Bulletin*, 134, 1-34.

Harris, P. L., & Jalloul, M. (2013). Running on Empty? Observing Causal Relationships of Play and Development. *American Journal of Play*, 6, 29-38.

### **November 15<sup>th</sup>: Figuring out what could actually happen**

**Question**: Are young children too conservative or too fanciful in judging what could actually happen? Why?

Shtulman, A. & Carey, S. (2007). Improbable or impossible? How children reason about the possibility of extraordinary events. *Child Development*, 78, 1015-1032.

Goulding, B. W. & Friedman, O. (2021). A similarity heuristic in children's possibility judgments. *Child Development*, 92, 662-671.

Goulding, B. W., Khan, F., Fukuda, K., Lane J.D., & Ronfard, S. (Under Review). The development of modal intuitions: A test of two accounts

### **November 22<sup>nd</sup>: Imitation**

**Question**: Why do young children imitate so faithfully?

Hoehl, S., Keupp, S., Schleihauf, H., McGuigan, N., Buttelmann, D., & Whiten, A. (2019). 'Over-imitation': A review and appraisal of a decade of research. *Developmental Review*, 51, 90-108.

Yu, Y., & Kushnir, T. (2020). The ontogeny of cumulative culture: Individual toddlers vary in faithful imitation and goal emulation. *Developmental Science*, 23, e12862.

**November 29<sup>th</sup>: Innovation**

**Question:** Why do young children imitate so faithfully?

Beck, S., et al. (2016). Individual differences in children's innovative problem-solving are not predicted by divergent thinking or executive functioning. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B*, 371, 20150190

Rawlings, B. S., Flynn, E. G., & Kendal, R. L. (2022). Personality predicts innovation and social learning in children: Implications for cultural evolution. *Developmental Science*, 25(1), e13153.

**December 6<sup>th</sup>: Writing workshop**