Psychology 354 The Cognitive Sciences: One Or Many?

Brief Course Overview A Fragmented Psychology A Unified Cognitive Science Cognitive Science Or The Cognitive Sciences?

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Course Evaluation

- Midterm exam worth 30%
 Exam format: 10 written definitions + one 3-4 page
- essay, with some choice • Cumulative final exam worth 50%
- Exam format: same as midterm, cumulative essay, definitions post-midterm
- Ten 10-minute quizzes worth 20%
 - Quiz format: Short answer essay based on required readings
- Check the syllabus for the schedule!

Required Textbook

- Dawson, M.R.W. (2013). Mind, Body, World: Foundations of Cognitive Science
- Link to book information from course website takes you to a site that also provides a free pdf of the book





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The Rutgers Definition

The approach in cognitive science, in contrast with the approach taken by other investigators interested in similar issues, is essentially computational. The goal is to understand such aspects of intelligent performance as perception, language processing, planning, problem solving, reasoning, and learning, in terms of the computational processes that underwrite these skills, as well as the computational mechanisms (be they silicon hardware, or neural tissue) that may instantiate them. The pursuit is essentially multi-disciplinary and involves techniques and knowledge drawn from experimental psychology, computer science, neuroscience, philosophy, linguistics, mathematics, and engineering."

The Waterloo Definition

"Cognitive Science is the interdisciplinary study of mind and intelligence, embracing psychology, philosophy, linguistics, neuroscience, anthropology, computer science and engineering. The study of mind is exciting for theoretical reasons, since the attempt to investigate the nature of thinking is as challenging as anything attempted by science. [...] The study of mind is inherently interdisciplinary, requiring the diverse insights and methodologies of psychologists, philosophers, computer scientists, linguists, neuroscientists, anthropologists, and other thinkers."

-- from the University of Waterloo web site

University of Waterbook

A Shared Foundation

- The Sloan Foundation "provided grants to several universities with the condition that the funds be used to promote communication between disciplines" (Miller, 2003, p.143)
- Each discipline "had progressed far enough to recognize that the solution to some of its problems depended crucially on the solution of problems traditionally allocated to other disciplines" (Miller, 2003)
- Communication difficulties within single disciplines like psychology. How can interdisciplinary communication, required in cognitive science, be possible?



The State University



Unified At Birth

"This general significance of the experimental method is being more and more widely recognized in current psychological investigation; and the definition of experimental psychology has been correspondingly extended beyond its original limits. We now understand by 'experimental psychology' not simply those portions of psychology which are directly accessible to experimentation, but the whole of individual psychology" (Wundt & Titchner, 1873/1904, p. 8)





Crisis In Psychology Not long after its creation, psychology fractured, producing what Bühler called in 1927 a crisis

in psychology
For Sigmund Koch (1993, p. 902) "psychology is misconceived when seen as a coherent science or as any kind of coherent discipline devoted to the empirical study of human beings. Psychology, in my view, is not a single discipline but a collection of studies of varied cast, some few of which may qualify as science, whereas most do not."





Psychology Is Fractured

- Leahey (1987, p. 3) calls psychology a "large, sprawling, confusing human undertaking."
- "It is as though opposing armies were fighting battles in order to win the right to define the nature of the war" (Boden, 1981, p. 71)
- Psychology is "a bunch of men standing on piles of their own crap, waving their hands and yelling 'look at me, look at me'" (Gilbert, 2002).



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A Narrow Vision

- Specialization and fracturing within psychology narrows its vision
- "Psychologists often ignore work outside their own laboratories, usually ignore work outside their own subspecialties, and almost always ignore work outside their own discipline" (Gilbert, 2002, p. 3).
- In short, psychology is not interdisciplinary



Daniel Gilbert

From Content To Foundations

- One problem with being trained in psychology is that we are mostly exposed to content areas, and not to foundational assumptions. Indeed, psychology may not have any foundational assumptions to be shared!
- In contrast, cognitive science may permit diverse researchers to communicate with one another because they share foundational assumptions!

Cognitive Science Is Born

- Cybernetics arose in the 1940s when researchers from different disciplines used information theory and feedback as foundational ideas
- Cybernetics evolved into cognitive science by the end of the 1950s
- "I date the moment of conception of cognitive science as 11 September, 1956, the second day of a symposium organized by the 'Special Interest Group in Information Theory' at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology" (Miller, 2003, p. 142)



Unity In Cognitive Science?

- Cognitive science might be less fractured than psychology
- "I went away from the symposium with the strong conviction, more intuitive than rational, that human experimental psychology, theoretical linguistics, and computer simulation of cognitive processes were all part of a larger whole" (Miller's reaction to the 1956 Symposium On Information Theory).



A Shared Foundation **The Information Processing Hypothesis** The human mind is a complex system that receives, stores, retrieves, transforms and transmits information What are the implications of this assumption? Communication Research methods

Research questions

Neumann machine, and the

production system

Interdisciplinary studies

Classical Cognitive Science

- The information processing hypothesis united cognitive science because 'information processing' was taken by most to mean 'the kind of processing digital computers do'
- This led to incredible breakthroughs in the study of problem solving and language
- This also led to the development of computer simulations of high-level cognition



Allen Newell and Herbert Simon



Classical Foundations Classical cognitive science sees cognition as the rulegoverned manipulation of symbols • It is inspired by the digital computers of the 20th century It's key idea is the physical symbol system Its key architectures are the Turing machine, the von

Von Neumann and the EDVAC

Broken Promises By the mid-1970s, however, cognitive science began to fracture

- First, the promise of the classical approach had failed to materialize
- "An overall pattern had begun to take shape ...: an early, dramatic success based on the easy performance of simple tasks, or low-quality work on complex tasks, and then diminishing returns, disenchantment, and, in some cases, pessimism" (Dreyfus, 1992, p. 99).





Connectionist Foundations

- Connectionist cognitive science views cognition as emerging from multiple, simultaneous and simple processes
- It is inspired by the architecture of the brain
- It's key idea is parallel distributed processing
- Its key architectures are the perceptron, the multi-layered perceptron, and the autoassociative network



Standard Pattern Associator

Embodied Cognitive Science

- Another reaction against classical cognitive science was embodied cognitive science
- It replaced classical emphasis on planning with a new emphasis on action, and feedback between the world and the agent that depended on the agent's embodiment
- This led to the development of the "new robotics" and the notion of the extended mind





Embodied Foundations

- Embodied cognitive science views cognition as emerging from structured relations between an agent and its world
- It is inspired by replacing planning with acting
- It's key ideas are situatedness and embodiment
- Its key architectures are behavior-based robots



Domo

Three Schools Of Thought

- Between September 11, 1956 and today cognitive science appears to have splintered into three schools of thought
 - Classical cognitive science
 Connectionist cognitive science
- Embodied cognitive science
 Each school of thought appears to use a very difference
- appears to use a very different language to explain cognition
- The three schools of thought are frequently at odds with one another



Tension Between Positions

- "The problem with connectionist models is that all the reasons for thinking that they might be true are reasons for thinking that they couldn't be psychology" (Fodor & Pylyshyn, 1988, p. 66)
- "The idea that human activity is determined by rules is not very plausible when one considers that most of what we do is not naturally thought of as problem solving" (Horgan & Tienson, 1996, p. 31)
- "Models of the world simply get in the way. It turns out to be better to use the world as its own model" (Brooks, 1991, p.139)









The Cognitive Sciences

- One possibility is that cognitive science is paradigmatic, and that the fractionation that we have discussed indicates qualitatively distinct approaches to explaining cognition
- "The modern fragmentation of cognitive science might be an example of communication breakdowns produced by the existence of incommensurable theories. For instance, it is not uncommon to see connectionist cognitive science described as a Kuhnian paradigm shift away from classical cognitive science (Horgan & Tienson, 1996; Schneider, 1987). When embodied cognitive science is discussed in Chapter 5, we will see that it too might be described as a new paradigm."

Cognitive Science

- A second possibility is that cognitive science is preparadigmatic, and that the fractionation that we have discussed indicates variety – to be later unified – in determining the core elements of cognitive theory
- "In the early stages of the development of any science different men confronting the same range of phenomena, but not usually all the same particular phenomena, describe and interpret them in different ways" (Kuhn, 1970, p. 17).
- "My suspicion is that cognitive science has achieved some general agreement about the kinds of phenomena that it believes it should be explaining. However, it is pre-paradigmatic with respect to the kinds of technical details that it believes are necessary to provide the desired explanations."