"Life of Brain"

Selves and Societies in the Age of the Brain and Mind Sciences (~1940 +)

Objectives:
This class investigates into the history and culture of the psych- and neurosciences in “Western” societies of the 20th and 21st centuries. We will consider the decades during and after the Cold War. With this periodization, we will cover the time when cybernetic perspectives evolved, when the brain became synaptic and plastic, when the mind and brain sciences became increasingly experimental, when different methods of testing, neuroimaging, and data processing arose, and when the neurosciences became institutionalized and acquired a highly policy-relevant voice. The course will be framed by a consideration of the ne(ur)oliberal subject: In what contexts does it exist? What are its characteristics? What role do the psych- and neurosciences play in creating, maintaining, or challenging this concept? And, finally, what is the role of the humanities and social sciences in the “Age of the Brain” (Littlefield & Johnson 2012)?

This class rests entirely on the contributions of each participant. The discussions will be driven by our interdisciplinary curiosity and guided by the assigned readings. We will commence with an introduction to contemporary debates around the mind/brain sciences in the humanities and social sciences. Subsequently, we will dig more deeply into the specifics of how the past and contemporary psych- and neurosciences acquire data, how they process them, and how their results eventually create new knowledge about brains, minds, and whole populations far beyond the laboratory. In particular, we will inquire into the use and reproduction of social categories through the scientific engagement with (non-)human research subjects and machines, such as humanness, intelligence, health, age, ethnicity, and sex/gender. We will talk about the extent to which these categorizations rest on, contrast, or comply with the concepts of ever-changing plastic, probabilistic, and enhanceable brains.
Schedule and Readings:
Font color black: selection of relevant readings; font color grey: supplementary readings.

1/21 Introduction: Psych-/Neuro-Cultures and Debates

Scott Vreeco (2010), “Neuroscience, Power and Culture: An Introduction”
Fernando Vidal (n.d.), “Psychology and Classifications of the Sciences”
Susan L. Star (1989), Regions of the Mind: Brain Research and the Quest for Scientific Certainty
Nadine Weidman (1999), Constructing Scientific Psychology: Karl Lashley’s Mind–Brain Debates
Christina E. Erneling & David M. Johnson (eds.) (2005), The Mind as a Scientific Object: Between Brain and Culture

1/26 Neuroscience and Biopolitics in the 20th and 21st Centuries

Troy Duster (2003), Backdoor to Eugenics

2/9 Methods of the Mind/Brain Sciences I: Overview

Simon Cohn (2008), “Making Objective Facts from Intimate Relations: The Case of Neuroscience and Its Entanglements with Volunteers”


2/23 Methods of the Mind/Brain Sciences II: Brain Imaging & Data

Kelly Ann Joyce (2008), Magnetic Appeal: MRI and the Myth of Transparency (excerpts)


Anne Beaulieu (2004), “From Brainbank to Database: The Informational Turn in the Study of the Brain”


Neuroscientific Authority
Deena Skolnick Weisberg et al. (2008), “The Seductive Allure of Neuroscience Explanations”

Imaging
Joseph Dumit (2004), Picturing Personhood: Brain Scans and Biomedical Identity
Morana Alač (2011), Handling Digital Brains: A Laboratory Study of Multimodal Semiotic Interaction in the Age of Computers

Digital Technologies
Lev Manovich (2013), Software Takes Command
Natasha D. Schüll (2012), Addiction by Design: Machine Gambling in Las Vegas

3/16 Cognition, Life, and Machines
Roberto Cordeschi (2002), The Discovery of the Artificial: Behaviour, Mind and Machines Before and Beyond Cybernetics


Jamie Cohen-Cole (2014), *The Open Mind: Cold War Politics and the Sciences of Human Nature*

3/30 **The ‘Clinical’ Brain**

Emily Martin (2007), *Bipolar Expeditions: Mania and Depression in American Culture*

Jonathan Metzl (2009), *Protest Psychosis: How Schizophrenia Became a Black Disease*

Mind/Brain-Specific

Tanya M. Luhrmann (2011), *Of Two Minds: An Anthropologist Looks at American Psychiatry*

Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari (1987), *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*

Paula J. Caplan & Lisa Cosgrove (eds.) (2004), *Bias in Psychiatric Diagnosis*

Joseph Dumit (2005), “The Depsychiatrisation of Mental Illness”

Francisco Ortega & Suparna Choudhury (2011), “‘Wired up Differently’: Autism, Adolescence and the Politics of Neurological Identities”


General


Ian Hacking (1999), “Making Up People”


Geoffrey C. Bowker & Susan L. Star (1999), *Sorting Things Out: Classification and Its Consequences*
4/6 Brain, Mind, Self—Human and Non-Human


Pieter R. Adriaens & Andreas de Block (2010), “The Evolutionary Turn in Psychiatry: A Historical Overview”


Fernando Vidal (2009), “Brainhood, Anthropological Figure of Modernity”


The Self


Sex/Gender

Rebecca Jordan-Young (2010), *Brain Storm: The Flaws in the Science of Sex Differences* (excerpts)

Anne Fausto-Sterling (2000), Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality (chapter 5: “Sexing the Brain: How Biologists Make a Difference”)


Human vs. Non-Human


Tania Munz (2005), “The Bee Battles: Karl von Frisch, Adrian Wenner and the Honey Bee Dance Language Controversy”
Gregory Radick (2005), “Primate Language and the Playback Experiment, in 1890 and 1980”
Michael Pettit (2009), “The Problem of Raccoon Intelligence in Behaviourist America”

4/13 Plasticity

Catherine Malabou (2004), What Should We Do with Our Brain?
Suparna Choudhury & Kelly A. McKinney (2013), “Digital Media, the Developing Brain and the Interpretive Plasticity of Neuroplasticity”
Jonna Brenninkmeijer (2010), “Taking Care of One’s Brain: How Manipulating the Brain Changes People’s Selves”
William Connolly (2002), Neuropolitics: Thinking, Culture, Speed
Gilles Deleuze (1992), “Postscript on the Societies of Control”

4/27 Wrap-Up

Helge Kragh (2002), “Problems and Challenges in the Historical Study of the Neurosciences”
Roger Cooter (2014), “Neural Veils and the Will to Historical Critique: Why Historians of Science Need to Take the Neuro-Turn Seriously”
Transdisciplinary Neurosciences
Melissa M. Littlefield & Jenell Johnson (eds.) (2012), The Neuroscientific Turn: Transdisciplinarity in the Age of the Brain
Francisco Ortega & Fernando Vidal (eds.) (2010), Neurocultures: Glimpses into an Expanding Universe
Dustin Tingley (2006), “Neurological Imaging as Evidence in Political Science: A Review, Critique, and Guiding Assessment”

Neuroethics
Jonathan D. Moreno (2006), Mind Wars: Brain Research and National Defense
Martha J. Farah (ed.) (2010), Neuroethics: An Introduction with Readings (excerpts)

Critical Studies
Maarten Derksen, Signe Vikkelsø & Anne Beaulieu (2012), “Social Technologies: Cross-Disciplinary Reflections on Technologies in and from the Social Sciences”