

Myth and Method in Psychology

Module Code	4PSYC001X
Module Level	4
Length	Session One, Three Weeks
Site	Central London
Host Course	London International Summer Programme
Pre-Requisite	None
Assessment	In-class group debate (40%) and a 2,400 word essay (60%).

Special features: The module includes a half-day field trip to the Freud Museum, Hampstead.

Summary of module content

In this module, we will explore the scientific evidence for phenomena widely accepted by the public, but whose scientific validity remains open to challenge including, for example, astrology and near death experiences. We will examine the methods used in the investigation of such popular myths and examine, from a psychological perspective, the factors which underlie how they grow and are sustained. The module involves a critical review of the scientific evidence for these phenomena, and general consideration of the application of scientific method.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, the successful student will be able to:

- Evaluate critically the evidence for a range of popular beliefs in psychological phenomena from outside academic psychology GA1
- Demonstrate an understanding of the factors that lead to popular acceptance of unsubstantiated phenomena. GA1
- Describe, evaluate and discuss psychological theory and approaches to a range of issues raised by beliefs in popular myths from around the globe. GA1, GA4
- Demonstrate skills in researching, summarising and reviewing relevant literature, and to employ an appropriate style for academic writing. GA1, GA2
- Research and summarise a relevant area of psychological literature as a group task and to present findings to their peers. GA1 GA2

Graduate Attributes these learning outcomes contribute to:

- GA1 Critical and creative thinkers
- GA2 Literate and effective communicator
- GA3 Entrepreneurial
- GA4 Global in outlook and engaged in communities
- GA5 Social, ethically and environmentally aware

Indicative syllabus content

The module examines a wide variety of different areas of non-academic psychology and parapsychology with topics concerning phenomena widely accepted by the public, but whose scientific validity remains open to challenge. The module requires students to adopt a critical review of the scientific evidence for these phenomena, and general consideration of the application of scientific methodology. Areas investigated include:

- Astrology
- Near death experiences
- Dreams
- Myths of popular psychology
- Homeopathy
- Hypnosis & Clinical Hypnotherapy
- Homeopathy & Placebo
- Anomalous phenomena
- Para-normal

The module provides students with the set of skills necessary to produce a coherent research led academic piece of written work directed towards resolving the issue posed in the assessment question. Through which they can demonstrate their understanding of major theories, research and issues. Along with a critical awareness of the strengths and limitations of psychological theory.

Teaching and learning methods

Over a three week block during the summer, teaching will be through a combination of lectures and seminars. With 2-hour lectures being the main vehicle of delivery for the key theories and concepts of the subject matter covered in the module. Lectures are supplemented by 2-hour seminars, which incorporate the knowledge base from the lecture programme and consist of group discussions and guided group work activities. The seminars in the module have been designed to cement the information students will learn in the lectures, in particular, areas that are widely accepted as valid by the general population will be evaluated from a scientific perspective which they will then utilise for their assessments.

Activity type	Category	Student learning and teaching hours*
Lecture	Scheduled	24
Seminar	Scheduled	20
Tutorial	Scheduled	
Project supervisor	Scheduled	
Demonstration	Scheduled	
Practical Classes and workshops	Scheduled	

Supervised time in studio/workshop	Scheduled	
Fieldwork	Scheduled	4
External visits	Scheduled	
Work based learning	Scheduled	
Total Scheduled		48
Placement	Placement	0
Independent study	Independent	152
Total student learning and teaching hours		200

*the hours per activity type are indicative and subject to change.

Assessment rationale

The module is assessed by an in-class group debate (40%) and a 2,400 word essay (60%).

The group debates will assess the ability of the students to work collaboratively to research and summarise a relevant area of psychological literature on popular unsubstantiated phenomena and to present findings in the form of an argument to their peers at an appropriate level.

In the coursework essay students will take a topic from the group debates and explore relevant research evidence individually. Students will be expected to demonstrate in-depth knowledge drawing on academic information via books, journals, the internet and other sources; critically evaluate that information and show their ability to communicate that knowledge in a precise and coherent manner.

Assessment criteria

In the group debate each group of students is expected to:

- Demonstrate a thorough understanding of the topic under investigation
- Demonstrate the ability to search for, recognise and critically evaluate information salient to a topic
- Present the argument clearly and concisely and at an appropriate level to an audience of peers.
- Respond to questions with reasoned argument and use of evidence.

In the Coursework essay (2,400 words) students are expected to

- Demonstrate they have considered relevant psychological theory and empirical research
- Demonstrate that they have addressed the main issues and controversies related to the essay topic area

Assessment methods and weightings

Assessment name	Weighting %	Qualifying mark %	Qualifying set	Assessment type (e.g. essay, presentation, open exam or closed exam)
Group Debate	40	30		Oral Presentation
Coursework Essay	60	30		2,400 word Essay

Synoptic assessment

Sources

Essential reading

Roberts, R., & Groome, D. (2001) *Parapsychology: The Science of Unusual Experience*. London: Arnold.

Other indicative reading:

Della Salla, S. (2007) *Tall Tales about the Mind and Brain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Coleman, A. (1995) *Controversies in Psychology*. London: Longman.

Blackmore, S. (1996) *In Search of the Light: The Adventures of a Parapsychologist*. New York: Prometheus Books.

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