

# Knowledge and Birth

Psyc 207  
Section 001  
Fall Term 1  
Year: 2016/17



Psych 207: Contemporary Topics in  
Cognitive and Biological Psychology

Kalina Christoff, PhD  
Professor  
Department of  
Psychology

This course examines different forms of human knowledge and how cognitive, biological, and social processes can shape and sometimes misshape this knowledge. Our knowledge about the process of giving birth comes from multiple sources, including scientific evidence, cultural beliefs, medical practices, the mass media, and personal experiences. The ways by which we come to possess, use, and question the validity of this knowledge will be discussed.

## Location and times for classes

Lecture room: Rm. 182, IBLC Irving K Barber Learning Centre (1961 East Mall)

Lecture times: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:00 pm - 3:20 pm

## Required materials

There will be no textbook for this class. However, you will need to acquire your own iClicker (any type is fine: iClicker, iClicker +, iClicker 2). Clickers may be purchased from the Bookstore or second hand.

There will also be a number of required films for viewing. The main films will be:

- **The Business of Being Born (Original Documentary)**
- **More Business of Being Born: Episode 2, Special Deliveries**
- **More Business of Being Born: Episode 3, Explore Your Options**




Those three films can be downloaded online from [www.thebusinessofbeingborn.com](http://www.thebusinessofbeingborn.com) for \$9.99 USD for the original documentary and 8.99 USD each for the extra two required videos. The original documentary is also available on Netflix. It is strongly recommended that you obtain your own copy of the films so that you can consult them on different occasions throughout the course, as needed.



### Learning objectives

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

1. Identify and analyze the sources (e.g., social, personal, scientific) of your own knowledge about birth.
2. Understand the cognitive, biological, and social mechanisms that shape our knowledge about birth.
3. Discuss how and when, in the context of birth, knowledge can include
  - a. incomplete truths
  - b. self-fulfilling truths
  - c. culturally-determined truths
  - d. motivated truths
  - e. point-of-view truths
  - f. illusory truths
4. Distinguish the different domains of knowledge about birth (scientific, medical, personal, traditional, visceral), question the validity of knowledge within each domain, and understand how different domains interact to form our overall knowledge of birth.
5. Connect course material across different course parts to form a critical understanding of our knowledge about birth.

<p><b>Instructor:</b>  <b>Kalina Christoff</b>  <a href="mailto:kchristoff@psych.ubc.ca">kchristoff@psych.ubc.ca</a>            Office hours:            Wednesday, 9:30 am - 11:00 am            (starting Sept 21st)            Psychology Dept, Rm. 3408            (2136 West Mall)</p>		<p>Dr. Christoff has B.Sc. in Psychology and M.Sc. in Cognitive Science from New Bulgarian University and a Ph.D. in Psychology from Stanford University. She did her post-doctoral training at Cambridge, UK, and has been on the faculty at UBC since 2004. She is an expert on cognition, human thought, reasoning, and problem solving, and is the director of The Cognitive Neuroscience of Thought Laboratory at UBC (<a href="http://www.christofflab.ca">www.christofflab.ca</a>). She has two amazing sons, 6-year-old Lukas and 3-year-old Kai, to whom she gave birth in very different circumstances: the first, in a traumatic hospital birth involving multiple interventions; the second, in an empowering home waterbirth involving no interventions.</p>	
<p><b>Teaching assistant:</b>  <b>Sarvenaz Ghattan</b>  <a href="mailto:sarvenaz.ghattan@gmail.com">sarvenaz.ghattan@gmail.com</a>            Office hours by appointment</p> <p>Sarvenaz is a third year student in integrated sciences. She is integrating biology and neuroscience and spicing it up with a little bit of philosophy and pharmacology. Sarvenaz is interested in the effect of medical and non-medical drugs from a brain, behaviour, and life perspective. When she is not hanging around the lab she is either travelling or camping (so far camping and mountaineering on snow is her favourite). She can help with questions about course material, exams, or iClickers. She is also happy to talk if you are stressed about school. Email to set up a time to chat!</p>		<p><b>Teaching assistant:</b>  <b>Shunya Yagi</b>  <a href="mailto:syagi@psych.ubc.ca">syagi@psych.ubc.ca</a>            Office hours:            Thursday 9am-10am</p> <p>Shunya is a PhD student in Neuroscience. His research focuses on hormonal regulations of adult neurogenesis and on learning and memory. Come by for office hours from 9am-10am on Thursdays.</p>	

### **Class attendance**

Please come to every class, prepared to participate. If you miss *class*, you are responsible for obtaining missed notes and important announcements. Due to the size of the class, you will **not** be able to regain participation points for activities in missed classes.

### **UBC Connect**

This course will require you to use the course's [UBC Connect](http://www.conect.ubc.ca) site. To access it, go to [www.conect.ubc.ca](http://www.conect.ubc.ca) and log in using your CWL. Important updates, information, assignments, surveys, discussion boards, and assigned readings, and other materials and announcements will be posted and completed through UBC Connect. You are responsible for checking the site frequently.

### **Lecture slides and notes**

Powerpoint slides and/or lectures notes will be made available online *after* class on the course's [UBC Connect](http://www.conect.ubc.ca) site.

Assigned readings are going to be posted on the [UBC Connect](http://www.conect.ubc.ca) site.

### **The use of electronics during lectures**

Using a laptop to take notes during a lecture may seem efficient, but it has been shown by research to side-track attention in detrimental ways -- both yours and the attention of other students around you (Fried, 2008; Sana, Weston, & Cepeda, 2013). This may be especially true in a dimly lit classroom, where the relatively brightly lit screens of laptops and other electronics stand out and draw attention to them involuntarily. Because of this, our policy on the use of electronics will be as follows: **The back 2 rows of the classroom will be reserved for laptop users. Please do not use a laptop if you are sitting anywhere else in the classroom.**

### **Important dates**

Thursday, Sept 8: First day of class (Course overview and introduction)

Tuesday, Sept 20: Last day to withdraw without W standing

Wednesday, Oct 14: Last day to withdraw with W standing

Tuesday, Oct 11: **First Exam**

Thursday, Nov 15: **Second Exam**

**Final exam** date: Date set by registrar (Exam period December 6-21, including Saturdays)

### **Grade Evaluation**

#### **Exams: 80% total**

First exam:	(Cover material from the Sept 13 to Oct 6)	(25%)
Second exam:	(Cover material from Oct 13 to Nov 10)	(25%)
Final (cumulative)	(Cover material from Sept 13 to Dec 1)	(30%)

Short paper assignments: 1% each

11 short papers = 11%

Papers will be approximately 250-500 words long and will be due every Tuesday at 11:59 PM starting Sept 20th. Each paper will receive a pass or fail evaluation. To be awarded 1%, a paper needs to receive a pass.

Class participation: 9% total

- iClicker participation during lectures
- completing in-class surveys
- completing Surveys and Discussion Boards will be issued and completed in the classroom and through [UBC Connect](#).

Class participation grade will be determined by the percentage of iClicker questions you answered in class and the percentage of in-class and connect surveys you completed *during your attendance in class*. If you complete 80% or more of these items, you will receive a full participation score of 9%. If you complete less than 80% of these items, you will receive participation points as listed in the table below.

If you miss a class and miss the opportunity to participate through in-class surveys or iClickers, you will not be able to make up for this participation (no exception to this policy, sorry). However, as long as you do not miss too many classes, you would still have a chance of getting the full participation score.

% of completed assignment	<10%	10-20 %	20-30 %	30-40%	40-50%	50-60%	60-70%	70-80%	>80%
Participation mark	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

Exams content

Exams will be based on the material covered in class and on the assigned readings. Exams will consist mostly of **multiple-choice questions**, but may also contains a few **fill-in-the-blanks and short answer questions**. **The final exam will be cumulative**. More details about the exams will be provided closer to exam dates.

**If you must miss any of Exam 1 or 2, for any reason, the other exam will be worth 30% and your final exam will be worth 50% of your course grade. No make-up** will be held for exam 1 and 2. Note that the final is going to be harder, so it is best not to miss those exams 1 and 2. **No accommodation** will be provided for missing more than one exam.

If you absolutely must miss the final exam due to an extenuating circumstance like severe illness, you or your caregiver must apply for Academic Concession by contacting your Faculty's Advising Office (e.g., Arts Advising through the Centre for Arts Student Services). Once academic concession has been granted, students will be allowed to take the make-up final exam.

## COURSE CONTENT AND STRUCTURE

There will be two main theme in the class that will be discussed and introduced. The two themes will appear in lectures through out the term.

### **Theme 1: Common knowledge about birth**

This theme will discuss notions that have become “common knowledge” about birth (e.g., “Birth is painful” and “Birth is dangerous”). We will discuss the following kinds of truths that can form part of our knowledge, and the cognitive, biological, and social mechanisms that underlie their formation:

- incomplete truths
- self-fulfilling truths
- culturally-determined truths
- motivated truths
- point-of-view truths
- illusory truths

In addition, we will discuss the cognitive, biological, and social mechanism underlying the following topics:

- How attention shapes knowledge
- How experience shapes knowledge, including the role of expectations, explanations, and interpretations
- How culture shapes our associative memory and associative learning
- How our associative memory shapes our intuitive judgments, including the role of processing fluency

### **Theme 2: Non-common knowledge about birth**

This theme will discuss different domains of knowledge about birth and the cognitive and biological mechanisms by which various factors shape this knowledge.

- Scientific knowledge
- Medical knowledge
- Traditional knowledge
- Visceral knowledge
- Personal knowledge
- Authoritative Knowledge

Throughout the course, we will discuss the mechanisms by which various factors shape our knowledge about birth, including: Emotions and Risk, Language and Metaphor, Attention, Technology, Evolution, Resource Scarcity, Pain and Morality

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

### Learning Commons

The [Learning Commons](#) website is UBC's online hub for study and research support. This interactive website provides you with a wealth of academic resources, from tutoring and workshops to study groups and online technology tools. It also offers plenty of information on a variety of academic topics, and links to nearly all of the academic resources offered at UBC.

### Writing Skills

The [UBC Writing Centre](#) has tutoring services, including an [Online Writer's Workshop](#). Also, Purdue University offers an amazing collection of information about writing at their [Online Writing Lab](#).

### UBC Academic Regulations

Information about academic regulations, course withdrawal dates and credits can be found in the [University Calendar](#).

### Is this course right for you?

Psych 207 is a special topics course and every section is completely different. This section (001) focuses on Knowledge and Birth. If this topic is not what you are looking for, you could examine the alternative offerings in other sections of Psych 207 (which are taught by different instructors). Psych 207 is not a required course, though it can serve as an elective or a Credit/D/Fail elective: <http://www.students.ubc.ca/coursesreg/registering-courses/credit-d-fail/>. Important withdrawal dates: Last day to withdraw without a W standing is September 20, 2015. Last day to withdraw with a W standing on your transcript is October 14, 2014. The course cannot be dropped after October 14, 2014.

### Psychology Department Grading Policies

In order to reduce grade inflation and maintain equity across multiple course sections, all psychology courses are required to comply with departmental norms regarding grade distributions. According to departmental norms, the mean grade in 100- and 200-level classes is 67 for a good class, 65 for an average class, and 63 for a weak class (with a standard deviation of 14). Scaling may be used in order to comply with these norms; grades may be scaled up or down as necessary. Grades are not official until they appear on a student's academic record.

You will receive both a percent and a letter grade for this course. At UBC, they convert according to the key below:

A+	90-100%	B+	76-79%	C+	64-67%	D	50-54%
A	85-89%	B	72-75%	C	60-63%	F	0-49%
A-	80-84%	B-	68-71%	C-	55-59%		

**Psychology Department's Position on Academic Misconduct**

Cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic misconduct are very serious concerns of the University, and the Department of Psychology has taken steps to alleviate them. In the first place, the Department has implemented software that can reliably detect cheating on multiple-choice exams by analyzing the patterns of students' responses. In addition, the Department subscribes to TurnItIn--a service designed to detect and deter plagiarism. All materials (term papers, lab reports, etc.) that students submit for grading will be scanned and compared to over 4.5 billion pages of content located on the Internet or in TurnItIn's own proprietary databases. The results of these comparisons are compiled into customized "Originality Reports" containing several, sensitive measures of plagiarism; instructors receive copies of these reports for every student in their class.

In all cases of suspected academic misconduct, the parties involved will be pursued to the fullest extent dictated by the guidelines of the University. Strong evidence of cheating or plagiarism may result in a zero credit for the work in question. According to the University Act (section 61), the President of UBC has the right to impose harsher penalties including (but not limited to) a failing grade for the course, suspension from the University, cancellation of scholarships, or a notation added to a student's transcript.

All graded work in this course, unless otherwise specified, is to be original work done independently by individuals. If you have any questions as to whether or not what you are doing is even a borderline case of academic misconduct, please consult your instructor. For details on pertinent University policies and procedures, please see Chapter 5 in the UBC Calendar (<http://students.ubc.ca/calendar>) and read the University's Policy 69 (available at <http://www.universitycounsel.ubc.ca/policies/policy69.html>).