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, there will be a number of required films for viewing, which will also be the basis for a number of assignments. 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 $8.99 USD each. 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.

Instructor: Kalina Christoff
kchristoff@psych.ubc.ca
Office hours:
Friday, 10:30 am - 12:00 pm
Psychology Dept, Rm. 3408
(2136 West Mall)

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 (www.christofflab.ca). She has two amazing sons, 4-year-old Lukas and 1-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.

Teaching assistant: Tracy Cassells
(Head TA)
tracy@psych.ubc.ca
On-campus office hours:
Tuesday, 11:00 am - 12:30 pm
Psych Dept, Rm. 1115

Off-campus office hours (via Skype or Google): TBA

Tracy is a Ph.D. Candidate in Developmental Psychology and has completed enough Psychometric courses for a "minor" in Quantitative Methods for her graduate degree. She completed her MA in Clinical Psychology at UBC and her BA in Cognitive Psychology at the University of California, Berkeley. She is mother to 4-year-old Maddy and in her "spare" time writes about issues pertaining to birth and parenting, after becoming a bit of an advocate following the birth of her daughter.
Teaching assistant:
Mary Jia
mary.jia@psych.ubc.ca
Office hours:
Tuesday, 12:00 pm - 1:30 pm
Psych Dept, Rm. 2111
Mary is a second year student in the UBC Clinical Psychology program. Her MA thesis is about pathways to bullying and victimization among children with and without ADHD.

Teaching assistant:
Megan Mandryk
m.mandryk@alumni.ubc.ca
Office hours:
Tuesday, 3:30pm - 4:30pm
Neuroethics core, Rm. S144 (2211 Wesbrook Mall, Koerner Pavilion, Second floor)
Megan is a Masters student in Neuroethics at UBC, focusing on cognitive enhancement. She received her BA in Psychology from UBC in 2012. She has also worked as a research assistant in health psychology.

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 site. To access it, go to www.conect.ubc.ca and login using your CWL. Important updates, information, assignments, surveys, discussion boards, and other materials and announcements will be posted and completed through UBC Connect. Your 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 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 4: First day of class (Course overview and introduction)
Tuesday, Oct 21: Midterm
Tuesday, Nov 11: Remembrance Day (no class - UBC closed)
Thursday, Nov 27: Last day of Class
Final exam date: Date set by registrar (Exam period December 2-17, including Saturdays)
Grade Evaluation

Exams: 46% total
   Midterm: 23%
   Final: 23%   (The final is cumulative)

Paper assignments: 48% total
   8 short papers, each 6%
   (Papers will be less than a page long and will be due throughout the term.)

Class participation: 6% total
   During the course, a number of Surveys and Discussion Boards will be issued and completed in the classroom and through UBC Connect. Class participation will be assessed based on your participation in these Surveys and Discussions.

Midterm (23%) and final (23%) exams

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 contain 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 the midterm for any reason, your final exam will be worth 46% of your course grade. No make-up midterms will be held. 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).

Short paper assignments (48% total)

Students will write and submit 8 short papers (less than one page) throughout the course. Each of these papers will be worth 6% of the final grade. The topics and instructions for how to write and submit each paper will be announced on course’s UBC Connect site. The papers will be due on the following dates

1st paper due: Tuesday, Sept 16
2nd paper due: Tuesday, Sept 23
3rd paper due: Tuesday, Sept 30
4th paper due: Tuesday, Oct 7
5th paper due: Tuesday, Oct 28
6th paper due: Tuesday, Nov 4
7th paper due: Thursday, Nov 13
8th paper due: Thursday, Nov 20

Late paper assignments will be accepted, but 10% per day will be deducted. No assignments will be accepted after 7 days. Please, plan ahead in order to avoid penalties.
COURSE CONTENT AND STRUCTURE

Part 1: Common knowledge about birth
The first part of the course 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

Part 2: Non-common knowledge about birth
The second part of the course 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?
Psyc 207 is a special topics course and every section is completely different. This section (002) 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 Psyc 207 (which are taught by different instructors). Psyc 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 with a W standing is September 16, 2014. Last day to withdraw with a W standing on your transcript is October 10, 2014. The course cannot be dropped after October 10, 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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>90-100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>85-89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>80-84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>76-79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>72-75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>68-71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>64-67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>60-63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>55-59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>50-54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0-49%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
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).