

PSYC2007/6010: Essay

Overview

Will there be a role for psychology in the future given current and ongoing advances in neuroscience? If so, what will this role be and why?

In this essay you will assume that mental causation does not exist.

Word count: 2000 maximum.

For those doing the masters course (PSYC6010) the word count is 2500.

Things to consider

Essentially you are considering the question of whether psychology will ultimately be subsumed by neuroscience/biology.

Your essay will be arguing for a particular point of view, either psychology will eventually be subsumed by neuroscience, or it will not.

This is not an essay on philosophy. You will need to define your terms, but do not get involved in a philosophical argument. Philosophy is interesting, but not the topic we are doing here.

This essay topic is way more pragmatic. Given the complexity of the brain and how it generates psychological constructs, will it be more effective, in certain situations, understand things at the psychological level instead of a neuroscience one. Focus isn't on which approach (neuroscience or psychology) is intrinsically better

Think over the issues we covered in lectures, specifically the complexity of the brain (e.g. number of cells, connections between them, both feedforward and feedback, neurotransmitter pathways etc.) the difficulty of imaging the cortex, both from a structural and functional perspective, and the different ways a system can be understood (i.e. Marr's different levels of understanding a complex system). In your essay, it will not be sufficient to merely make the case for how hard it would be to explain things from a neuroscience perspective, you would also need to make the case that a psychology-based approach has merit (if you think that it does). Also, when considering potential advances in neuroscience, cannot assume we will come up with a magic scanner that will tell us everything about a person's neural structure and functioning. Therefore consider what would be involved in getting that level of information

Refer to the links on the Wattle page for information from Learning Adviser, Academic Skills & Learning Centre on things to consider when writing an essay. Note this advice is more generic (i.e. it also covers essays for Arts courses).

Marking and writing guide

Introduction (5% of grade)

You will need to: clearly set up what the issues are and define relevant terms/concepts and outline the logical structure of the argument that you will be making.

Main body (80%)

Develop your argument in detail, with supporting psychological and neuroscience evidence for it.

Conclusion (5%)

Summarise your argument and the key pieces of evidence and logic used to support it.

Writing style (5%)

Clarity of written expression. Note, when using jargon, you need to first explain what the terms mean. Some people think that if they use a lot of jargon, without explaining it, then what they write will look scientific and complex, and they will thus get a good grade for it. That approach doesn't work.

APA formatting (5%)

Compliance with APA formatting and referencing