

# **Syllabus**

## **Folk Teleology**

PhD Research Course  
Department of Cognitive Science  
Central European University  
Fall 2023, 2 credits

### **Class:**

Tuesdays 8:50am to 10:30am, in Room C503, Quellenstrasse 51, Vienna.

### **Instructor:**

Gergely Csibra

**Office hours:** by appointment

### **Course description:**

This course provides an introduction to the literature on folk teleology. Both theoretical and empirical works will be discussed, focusing on the cognitive aspects of teleological interpretation and explanation of various phenomena. The format of the course is a discussion seminar centred around seminal and more recent readings on the topic.

### **Learning Outcomes**

At the end of the course, students should have an overview on when and how humans deploy teleological interpretations and explanations, and should be aware of the key theoretical issues related to the nature and cognitive mechanisms of these processes.

### **Evaluation:**

Students are required to attend classes regularly and to participate actively in seminar discussions. Students are also required to give one or two short presentations of some chosen topic(s) and lead the following discussion. Finally, students are required to submit a term-paper (about 3000 words) in a topic agreed in advance by the instructor. The final grade will be composed of evaluations of these three elements in the following proportions:

Participation in class discussion (20%)

Presenting papers and leading discussion (30%)

End-of-term essay (50%), deadline for submission: December 18, 2023

Date	Topic	Literature
Sep 19	Teleological inversion	Csibra & Gergely, 2007; Baker et al., 2009
Sep 26	Goal bias	Lakusta & Landau, 2012; Lakusta & DiFabrizio, 2017
Oct 3	Goals in language	Allen et al., 2010; Rissman & Majid, 2019
Oct 10	Tools	Casler & Kelemen, 2005; Hernik & Csibra, 2009; Kelemen, 1999
Oct 17	Nature	ojalehto et al., 2013; Lombrozo & Rehder, 2012; Roberts et al., 2021
Oct 24	Explanatory bias	Järnefelt et al., 2015; Kelemen et al., 2013
Oct 31	Teleological vs. causal explanations	Lombrozo & Carey, 2006; Lombrozo, 2010;
Nov 7	Teleological intuitions	Kertész & Kodaj, 2023; de Smedt & de Cruz, 2020a
Nov 14	Teleological essentialism 1	Rose & Nichols, 2019, 2020; Rose et al., 2020
Nov 21	Teleological essentialism 2	Neufield, 2021; Joo & Yousif, 2022
Nov 25	Anthropocentrism	Lewry et al., 2023; Preston & Shin, 2021; Banerjee & Bloom, 2014
Dec 5	Conspiracy theories	Wagner-Egger et al., 2018

## Literature

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