

# PS371-15 Animal Behaviour

**24/25**

**Department**

Psychology

**Level**

Undergraduate Level 3

**Module leader**

**Credit value**

15

**Module duration**

12 weeks

**Assessment**

40% coursework, 60% exam

**Study location**

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

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## Description

### Introductory description

This main aim of this module is to develop students' scientific understanding of the evolutionary approach to studying human psychology by examining the behaviour of non-human animals.

### Module aims

The module will consider how animals behave in their natural environment, and why they behave in these ways. Its focus is on scientific ideas of broad applicability. The module takes a comparative approach across a broad range of animal taxa, and considers animal behaviour in an integrative framework, from the points of view of its causation, function, evolution and development.

Students will collect behavioural data in the field and/or in practical classes and will be required to explore, visualise and analyse the data using standard software packages. They will be taught the basics of sound and video analysis and how to design behavioural experiments to test hypotheses.

### Outline syllabus

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

1. 1. Introduction to animal behaviour and the integrative approach, Tinbergen's 4 questions and different levels of analysis
2. Birdsong as a testcase for the integrative analysis of animal behaviour
3. Developmental and genetic bases of behaviour
4. Neural and physiological bases of behaviour (learning)
5. Predator avoidance and foraging
6. Principles of communication
7. Reproduction, parental care, mating systems
8. Social evolution: altruism, kin selection, conflict
9. Social behaviour and sociality: evolution, cooperation, individual differences
10. Comparative approaches to human behaviour
11. Revision Lecture
12. Revision Lecture

## Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- Analyse animal behaviour as part of an integrative framework where all aspects of behaviour are considered (development, mechanisms, evolution, adaptive value)
- Apply animal behaviour data to inform knowledge of the evolution and genetic origins of human behavioural and psychological traits
- Understand and develop basic knowledge of the neural, genetic and physiological bases of behaviour and how these interact to produce behaviour
- Analyse different aspects of animal behaviour, such as communication, predator avoidance, foraging, reproduction, and parental and social behaviour;
- Develop and apply collection, analysis and presentation of behavioural data and experimental design skills.

## Indicative reading list

Rubenstein, D. R. & Alcock, J. (2019). *Animal Behavior*, Eleventh Edition. Oxford University Press.

Searcy, W. A. & Nowicki, S. (2005). *The Evolution of Animal Communication*. Princeton University Press.

## Subject specific skills

Analysis of animal behaviour and consider this as part of a broader behavioural framework

Understanding and analysis of behavioural and psychological traits

Data collection, analysis and presentation of behavioural data and experimental design skills.

## Transferable skills

effective communication skills to develop a cogent argument supported by relevant evidence and being sensitive to the needs and expectations of an audience

critically evaluation primary and secondary sources  
effective personal planning skills  
data analysis and interpretation

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## Study

### Study time

| Type           | Required                     |
|----------------|------------------------------|
| Lectures       | 12 sessions of 2 hours (16%) |
| Seminars       | 9 sessions of 1 hour (6%)    |
| Other activity | 2 hours (1%)                 |
| Private study  | 115 hours (77%)              |
| Total          | 150 hours                    |

### Private study description

Guided Student Study

### Other activity description

Visit to Twycross Zoo

## Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

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## Assessment

You do not need to pass all assessment components to pass the module.

### Assessment group D1

|  | Weighting | Study time | Eligible for self-certification |
|--|-----------|------------|---------------------------------|
| Literature review  | 30%       |            | Yes (extension)                 |
| Presentation   | 10%       |            | No                              |
| 1 x 15 minute presentation on individually analysed data |           |            |                                 |
| Online Examination                                       | 60%       |            | No                              |

- Online examination: No Answerbook required

## Feedback on assessment

On oral presentation: feedback form accompanying mark that will give constructive feedback on both format (including slides, props, presentation skills) and on content (data collection, exploration, visualisation, analysis).

On lit review: feedback form that will consider the relevance and breadth of background research, discussion skills, ability to summarise the literature and detect relevant connections and overarching theoretical issues/hypotheses.

Formative feedback: bi-weekly online quizzes. These will be optional and not marked, but will provide students and the instructor feedback on students' understanding of major concepts.

[Past exam papers for PS371](#)

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## Availability

### Courses

This module is Optional for:

- UPHA-L1CA Undergraduate Economics, Psychology and Philosophy
  - Year 3 of L1CA Economics, Psychology and Philosophy
  - Year 3 of L1CC Economics, Psychology and Philosophy (Behavioural Economics Pathway)
  - Year 3 of L1CD Economics, Psychology and Philosophy (Economics with Philosophy Pathway)
  - Year 3 of L1CE Economics, Psychology and Philosophy (Philosophy and Psychology Pathway)
- UPHA-L1CB Undergraduate Economics, Psychology and Philosophy (with Intercalated Year)
  - Year 4 of L1CG Economics, Psychology and Philosophy (Behavioural Economics Pathway) (with Intercalated Year)
  - Year 4 of L1CH Economics, Psychology and Philosophy (Economics with Philosophy Pathway) (with Intercalated Year)
  - Year 4 of L1CJ Economics, Psychology and Philosophy (Philosophy and Psychology Pathway) (with Intercalated Year)
  - Year 4 of L1CB Economics, Psychology and Philosophy (with Intercalated Year)
- Year 3 of UPSA-C800 Undergraduate Psychology
- Year 4 of UPSA-C801 Undergraduate Psychology (with Intercalated year)
- Year 3 of UPSA-C804 Undergraduate Psychology with Education Studies
- Year 4 of UPSA-C806 Undergraduate Psychology with Education Studies (with Intercalated Year)

This module is Unusual option for:

- Year 3 of UPHA-L1CA Undergraduate Economics, Psychology and Philosophy

This module is Option list A for:

- Year 3 of UPSA-C804 Undergraduate Psychology with Education Studies

This module is Option list B for:

- Year 3 of UPHA-VL78 BA in Philosophy with Psychology
- Year 4 of UPHA-VL79 BA in Philosophy with Psychology (with Intercalated year)
- Year 1 of TPSS-C8P9 Postgraduate Taught Psychological Research
- Year 4 of UPHA-VL80 Undergraduate Philosophy with Psychology (with Work Placement)

This module is Option list C for:

- Year 3 of UPSA-C802 Undergraduate Psychology with Linguistics
- Year 4 of UPSA-C805 Undergraduate Psychology with Linguistics (with Intercalated Year)