

Short Paper 1: Challenges to Mindreading



Image from: www.sodahead.com

Assignment: No one ever said monkey mindreading was easy! Over the past couple of weeks, you have been introduced to some of the major challenges of studying animal cognition. Some of these difficulties are methodological (*i.e.*, anecdotal vs. empirical evidence), while others are philosophical (*i.e.*, anthropocentrism and anthropomorphism). **In this assignment, you must focus on ONE of these difficulties and make a case for why it is an obstacle for understanding the minds of other animals by using evidence from various sources.** For example, you might argue that we can never really understand the minds of other animals because we see the world through a human lens. Or, perhaps you think laboratory experiments are problematic because researchers cannot rule out alternative explanations for behaviors.

Writing Objectives: In this paper, you must develop a clear central claim and substantiate and illustrate your points with evidence. To do this, **you will have to synthesize the ideas of various authors and use them to bolster your thesis.** There is no “right answer” as to which challenge is the most significant; make your choice convincing by presenting a well-substantiated argument that is grounded in the methodological or philosophical issues raised in the course materials and in our class discussions.

Grading: This paper is worth 15% of your course grade. **A successful paper will have a clear thesis (central claim) and use evidence from various sources to illustrate points and strengthen your thesis. Your grade will also depend on your adherence to the formatting guidelines laid out in The Fine Print section of this prompt.** Please refer to the *Developing a Central Claim* and *Audience* handouts for useful advice on developing a strong thesis and writing a paper intended for an “intelligent but uninformed” audience.

Due Date: This assignment must be handed in at the beginning of class on **Tuesday, September 11th**. Papers turned in after the start of class will automatically be considered one day late and are subject to the late policy outlined in the syllabus.

The Fine Print: This paper should be **2 double-spaced pages** with 1-inch margins using a 12-point font comparable to Times New Roman. Please put your name, course section number, date, and the title of your paper at the top of the first page and number all pages. **Please paperclip your papers.** Printing double-sided is okay! Use proper **APA-style** citations within your paper and attach a **Works Cited page** at the end. If you have questions about APA-style citations or Works Cited pages, please refer to the **APA Style Guidelines** (the full

guide and/or the quick reference guide) posted in the Course Readings folder and linked to the syllabus on Sakai.

Sources: You must use **at least 3 text sources and 1 media source** from these lists and cite them properly within your paper. Which sources you select will depend on what you consider the most significant challenge to the study of animal minds.

Text Sources:

- Asquith, P.J. (2011). Of bonds and boundaries: What is the modern role of anthropomorphism in primatological studies? *American Journal of Primatology* 73: 238-244.
- Beckoff, M., Allen C., & Burghardt G. (2002). Introduction. In: *The Cognitive Animal: Empirical and Theoretical Perspectives on Animal Cognition*. (Beckoff, M., Allen C., & Burghardt G., Eds). Cambridge: MIT Press. pp. ix-xv.
- Crist, E. (2002). The inner life of earthworms: Darwin's argument and its implications. In: *The Cognitive Animal: Empirical and Theoretical Perspectives on Animal Cognition*. Beckoff, M., Allen C., & Burghardt G. (Eds). Cambridge: MIT Press. pp. 3-8.
- Fountain, H. (2009a, January 20). For the tough nuts, capuchin monkeys select the right stones. *The New York Times*. p. D3.
- Fountain, H. (2009b, March 10). Zoo chimp plans for his visitors, stockpiling rocks. *The New York Times*. p. D3.
- Gallup Jr., G., Anderson, J.R., Shillito, D.J. (2002). The mirror test. In: *The Cognitive Animal: Empirical and Theoretical Perspectives on Animal Cognition*. Beckoff, M., Allen C., & Burghardt G. (Eds). Cambridge: MIT Press. pp. 325-333.
- Pennisi, E. (1999). Are our primate cousins 'conscious'? *Science* 284 (5423): 2073-2076.
- Povinelli, D.J. (2004). Behind the ape's appearance: Escaping anthropocentrism in the study of other minds. *Daedalus* (133)1: 29-41.
- Ryan, M.J. (2011). Replication in field biology: The case of the frog-eating bat. *Science* 334: 1229-1230.
- Tomasello, M. & Call, J. (2011). Methodological challenges in the study of primate cognition. *Science* 334: 1227-1228.
- Wynne, C.L. (2004). The perils of anthropomorphism. *Nature* (Essay Concepts) 428: 606.

Media Sources:

- Bonobohandshake. (2010, December 27). *Lemur coke bottle demo*. Retrieved from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5q8jkYpCLUo>
- Cote1590. (2011, April 16). *False belief task*. Retrieved from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t1isYRIOVYw>
- Fletcher, M. (Writer and Editor). (2008). *Clever monkeys* [Television Series Episode]. J. Clarke & I. Tejaratchi (Producers), *Nature*. New York: Thirteen/WNET New York/BBC.
- National Public Radio (Producer). (2010, January 11). *Animal Minds*. [Audio podcast]. Radiolab podcast. Retrieved from <http://www.radiolab.org/2010/jan/11/>

Remember to take time to proofread your work, paying special attention to spelling, grammar, and punctuation.