

Ray Hyman
TLN 5163
PSY 507

Fall Term
1987-88

SEMINAR: PSYCHOLOGY OF DECEPTION

0.0 Administrative Details

0.1 Meetings: Wednesday, 2:00 to 4:00 P.M.
156 Straub Hall

THE FIRST MEETING WILL BE ON WEDNESDAY,
SEPTEMBER 30, 1987.

0.2 Textbook: Mitchell, R.W., & Thompson, N.S. (Eds.).
(1986). Deception: perspectives on human and
nonhuman deceit. Albany, NY: State University
of New York.

0.3 Assignments: We will read the textbook according to the
following schedule: For the second meeting,
Oct 7, read the Preface, Introduction, and
Chapters 1-3.
For the third meeting, Oct 14, read Chapters
4-15 (Some of these chapters can be skimmed).
For the fourth meeting, Oct 21, read Chapters
16-20 and the Epilogue.

Those taking the seminar for credit will
choose a subtopic of deception for further
reading and a short paper. Such students will
also lead a discussion of their subtopic
during one of the last two meetings.

MEETINGS AND TENTATIVE TOPICS

Meetings

Topics

1) Sep 30

PSYCHOLOGY OF CONJURING

The first psychologists to write on deception were Binet, Dessoir, Jastrow and Triplett. All four, writing between 1880 and 1900, focused on conjuring and stage magic as a paradigm example of deception. Both Binet and Jastrow consulted with the great magicians of their day. Triplett devotes several pages to his doctoral dissertation toward an exhaustive classification of ~~the~~ all the known conjuring effects. Magicians have clearly articulated several principles which they believe contribute to the success of their deceptions. Bartley Whaley, a contemporary expert on strategic and counter-deception, has used the magician as a model for understanding counter-deception.

On the other hand, the deceptions of the conjurer differ in important ways from deceptions of confidence men, swindlers, politicians, and advertisers. The conjurer's "victims" know that the conjurer will attempt to deceive them. Indeed, if he failed to deceive them, they would be disappointed and judge the conjurer as incompetent. Most deceptions, however, depend for their success on keeping the potential victim that deception is being attempted.

Dave Harkey, an inventor of conjuring effects and an accomplished performer, will join us to demonstrate and discuss some of the principles that enable the conjurer to deceive audiences.

FROM
1 REALIZING

20Oct 7

HISTORICAL & PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVES

We will discuss three chapters which, in their separate ways, attempt to provide a conceptual framework for understanding deception. The editors' introduce these three essays as follows:

"An articulation of our common sense of deception is essential for an adequate scientific communication on this subject. The first three essays offer general conceptual frameworks within which to interpret deception and distinguish its various types. Examining deception from the perspective of philosophical functionalism, Russow distinguishes between evolutionarily and morphologically produced deceptions such as mimicry, and psychologically produced deceptions such as lying. Mitchell creates further distinctions by characterizing different levels of deception in terms of 'programs' which create or are responsive to different complexities in the animals' world. Thompson employs concepts of natural design--adaptation, purpose, and development--to differentiate between types of deception...Taken together, these systems provide evidence for the assertion that mentalistic and teleological terms have objective meaning and can be useful in descriptions and explanations of animal behavior."

3)Oct 14

A COMPARATIVE APPROACH TO DECEPTION

The chapters to be discussed in this meeting deal with apparent "deception" by stomatopods, fireflies, birds, the arctic fox, dogs, elephants, monkeys, and chimpanzees. With the possible exception of the chimpanzees, none of these nonhuman creatures are usually credited with the ability to understand how their behavior will mislead their "victims." Because many writers insist upon intentionality as a necessary component of deception, we can question the attribution of deceptive capacities to these animals. The various authors, however, want to explore the possibility that human intentional deception may have its evolutionary roots in the mimicry, death-feigning, and other apparent "deceptions" in the animal world. Some of the writers also want to ask what is it that makes us want to describe some behaviors as deceptive.

4)Oct 21

HUMAN DECEPTION & INTENTIONALITY

Of the chapters to be discussed at this meeting, the editors write:

"Human deception is the standard from which the complexity of other deceptions is judged. The extensive planning and second-guessing required for success in mature human deceptions suggest a distinction between deceptions performed by humans and most nonhumans. Yet what we learn from the study of human deception can be used to understand the deceptions of nonhumans, and vice versa. Anderson's analysis of systematic factors which tend to produce and maintain deception provides a theoretical framework which might be used to integrate the various types of deception discussed in this book. Deception in sports, discussed by Mawby and Mitchell, is the human deception perhaps most closely allied to nonhuman deception in that it relies almost exclusively on bodily action, rather than on language..." A key chapter is the one by Vasek on the development of lying skills in children.

5)Oct 28

SWINDLES & CONFIDENCE GAMES

David Maurer's classic The Big Con [Later issued as The American Confidence Man] and Arthur Leff's Swindling and Selling brilliantly depict the confidence game as a play in which each participant enacts his or her role. Everyone, except the victim, is aware that the elaborate drama is a play. Swindles and confidence games provide excellent examples for studying how powerful deception can be.

6)Nov 4

LYING AND LIE-DETECTION

My library search on the topic "The Psychology of Deception" yielded 722 references from 1966 to the present. About 14% of these references deal with the use of deception in psychological experiments [the methodological and ethical problems]. This aspect of deception will not be covered in the present seminar. ^{LITERATURE} Approximately one-third of the psychological ^{on} deception focuses on the problem of detecting deception--especially lying. In fact, lie-detection represents the most frequent subtopic in research on deception. Although the study of lie-detection does not promise to contribute in any profound sense to a psychology of deception, perhaps it deserves some attention just because of the amount of research devoted to it and its societal importance.

7)Nov 11

SELF-DECEPTION

Self-deception seems to torment philosophers. Most of them admit that the term describes some real state of humans. But then they find it paradoxical because the same person can both know and not know that something is false. One way around this, of course, is to split the person into conscious and unconscious parts. Then we can say that the unconscious part intentionally misleads the conscious part. The philosophers deliberately avoid such a resolution because they believe that the concept of unconscious is just as mysterious as is the concept of self-deception. They fear that to explain self-deception in terms of unconscious processes is to indulge in a species of question-begging. Psychologists, from time to time, write about self-deception. Clinicians and psychoanalysts, of course, have no problems with the concept, especially when considering defense mechanisms. Cognitive psychologists have recently become interested because the idea of multiple processors in the brain, some of which have no access to others, is consistent with current theory.

8)Nov 18

PSYCHOLOGY AND DECEPTION

In what sense can we talk about a "Psychology of Deception?" Can we find a coherent set of psychological principles which will be coextensive with a clearly defined domain of deception?

9)Nov 25

[See below]

10)Dec 2

[See below]

The topics for the last two meetings will depend upon student selections. Some possibilities would be 1) Strategic and Military Deception; 2) Deception in Children; 3) Fraud in Science; 4) Clinical Aspects of Deception; 5) Elaboration on any of the topics discussed in the preceding meetings.