

COGS 1: INTRODUCTION TO COGNITIVE SCIENCE

FALL TERM 2026

Professors: Fred Callaway
Jonathan Phillips

Grad TA: Cove Geary

Course Meetings:
Lectures: 10:10 - 11:15am MWF ([Room TBD])
X-hour: 12:15 - 1:05pm Th

Office Locations: Callaway: Raven House 111
Phillips: Raven House 102
Geary: [TBD]

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Coffee/Office Hours:

Come join us for office/coffee hours:
Phillips (**coffee hours**, Raven House 112): [day/time TBD]
Callaway (office hours, Raven House 111): [day/time TBD]
Geary (office hours, [location TBD]): [day/time TBD]

Course description

Cognitive science is the interdisciplinary study of the mind as an information processor. This course will give you a broad overview of how this approach can take us. Trying to understand minds (including our own) is one of the most ambitious and difficult projects in all of science. While we have made some progress, it remains probably the greatest scientific challenge we face. Accordingly, our project will draw on every tool we can, including those from experimental psychology, computer science, philosophy, linguistics, vision science, anthropology, behavioral economics, and several varieties of neuroscience. This course will introduce you to the major tools and theories from these areas as they relate to the study of the mind. We will employ these perspectives while exploring the nature of computation and how it can help us understand mental processes such as perception, reasoning, attention, language, decision-making, morality, and even free will and consciousness. In short, this course will expose you to cognitive science, the foundations on which it rests, and the most important discoveries made so far.

Course Goals

By the end of the course, you should have gained important new insights into how your mind works and thus what exactly you are. You should also be well positioned to pursue more advanced and focused courses across various disciplines in cognitive science, with the unique ability to understand how these more focused areas of study fit into the broader endeavor of understanding the mind.

Course platform / remote tools

Almost all the major communication for the course will take place through the course Canvas site. Some additional short lectures may be pre-recorded and posted to Canvas, and the class readings will be available there as well.

Collaborative Groups

You will be assigned to small groups of 5-6 students, which you will be a part of throughout the course of the term. These groups are primarily intended as a resource that will help you during quizzes and while you develop your projects. In addition, there will likely be some other group activities that will work on together. These groups will be assigned in the first few weeks of class.

Required Texts

There is no textbook for this course and all readings and other course material will be posted on Canvas.

Coffee/Office hours:

In addition to traditional office hours, you can also join “coffee hours”. During this time, we'll convert the Cognitive Science common space (Raven House 112) into something more like a coffeeshop (we will have free coffee and tea) and will sometimes have some form of snack too. You'll find us in this space working and having a coffee or a snack and working on some cognitive science project or another. You should join us! In addition to coming to talk about material from the course or course assignments, you are welcome to simply come and do work, kind of like a regular coffee shop. We'll be around to answer questions if they come up and we'll also be happy to chat about material from any other course, or about any ideas you are thinking about and want feedback on. This will also be a chance to have conversations about your course of study at Dartmouth, your plans after college, etc. If you would find it helpful to talk individually for any reason, there is also the option of moving to a separate office next door.

For students who may prefer more traditional office hours, Fred Callaway will hold office hours in his office (Raven House 111) on [day/time TBD], and Cove Geary will hold office hours in [location TBD] on [day/time TBD]. Different office hours are good for different things: the graduate TA is a great resource for questions about the assignments, grading, and how research in cognitive science actually gets done, and the professors are happy to talk about anything from the course material to your broader intellectual interests and plans, including what it is like to major in Cognitive Science.

Learning Cognitive Science

Cognitive Science is inherently interdisciplinary. Because of this, everyone involved in cognitive science is constantly exposed to ideas, methods and frameworks that they don't yet understand. So, a basic prerequisite for doing good work in cognitive science is to be willing to try to understand new approaches or ways of thinking about the mind that are unfamiliar to you. We do not expect you to end up loving every approach or finding every topic to be fascinating, but good cognitive scientists try to see what each different approach gets right about how our minds work, even if they end up disagreeing with it overall. We will seek to embody these principles in this course, and expect you to take this approach, too.

Assignments and grading

Attendance/Participation: 5%

Quizzes and in-class assignments: 10%

Exams: 40% (20% each)

- Midterm: October 16th
- Final: November 20-24 (exact date and time set by the Registrar; TBD)

Projects: 45% of grade (Project 1: 15%; Project 2: 30%)

Project 1 (15% total):

7.5% - In-class project sketch - (Oct 8)

7.5% - Group presentation and feedback - (Oct 13)

Project 2 (30% total):

5% - In-class project sketch - (Nov 5)

2.5% - Group presentation and feedback - (Nov 10)

15% - Formal presentation - (Nov 14)

7.5% - Formal writeup - (Nov 17)

Attendance:

Attendance to the lectures and other class sessions is required and will be recorded randomly. Participation is encouraged and can help your grade.

Projects

- ***In-class project sketch:*** Twice during the term (Oct 8 and Nov 5, during the X-hour), we will have you sketch the outline of a novel approach to making progress in cognitive science in response to a specific prompt we will give you. These will be written on paper and submitted at the end of class. For the first project, the in-class sketch and the group presentation and feedback are the whole assignment. For the second project, you will go on to develop your sketch into a formal presentation and a formal writeup.
- ***Group presentations and feedback:*** You will then have a couple of days to refine and improve on your idea, using whatever tools you'd like, including Generative AI. You will then present this revised idea to your group for feedback. Presentations should not be longer than five minutes. The group will then spend a few minutes giving feedback on these presentations. **Group meetings will be attended by a TA or recorded (over zoom).** If they are recorded, the recording will be submitted to Cove Geary by midnight the day the presentation is due. Your grade for this part of the project will be half determined by both your own presentation and the quality of your constructive feedback on the other group members projects.
- ***Formal presentation:*** For the second project, you will then take all this feedback and continue to improve your project. At this point, you will submit your project in the form of a recorded presentation. You may use slides or any other visual aid you'd like, but you must present the project yourself. These presentations should be between 5 and 10 minutes long (they cannot go over 10 minutes). In addition, in places where you changed the content from the original in-class sketch, you should explain why you made those changes (you can take an additional 3 minutes to do this). We will spend a class session (Cognitive Science of Design, Oct 5) on what makes a presentation clear and effective, and formal presentations will be evaluated in part on those principles.
- ***Formal writeup:*** Shortly after you submit your recording, you will take this project and turn it into a written report. We encourage the use of generative AI in helping you think through how to most effectively communicate your key idea in a brief written report. The formal writeup may not be longer than 500 words (not including citations).

Policies: Late papers etc.

Assignments turned in late without permission are penalized by a third of a grade per day (e.g., A becomes A-). If you need an extension on an assignment, please *ask before the paper is due* to avoid penalties. We are serious about this! Participation in your group is also mandatory. Please get in touch with us ASAP if you have questions about group participation.

Generative Artificial Intelligence

By default, the use of Generative AI is not allowed in the course unless specified. There will be specific assignments where it either can be used or is actually required for the assignment. We have restructured the assignments in this course to both require you to do some hard thinking on your own (the importance of this will never go away), and to show you how to best make use of Generative AI to improve on your own ideas.

Note that ChatGPT and other Generative AIs can be useful for research, writing, and thinking. However, as we will discuss during this course, they also have severe limitations, including:

1. Errors: Generative AIs often make mistakes and hallucinate, including the generation of non-existent supporting data and sources. You should assume the output is incorrect unless you check the claims with reliable sources.
2. Bias: Their output typically reflects the biases of the data they were trained on and the people who trained them. These tools can exhibit output which includes poor structured reasoning and biases.
3. Citation: These tools use existing sources without citation. Therefore, using their outputs may put you at risk of plagiarism.

You will be fully held responsible for all errors or plagiarism contained in your submitted work. There are no exceptions. For additional guidelines and assistance on how to use it effectively, reach out to your instructors.

Academic Honor Principle

All work in this course is governed by Dartmouth's [Academic Honor Principle](#). The midterm and final must be completed entirely on your own (quizzes, by contrast, are designed to be worked on with your group), and the Generative AI policy above spells out when AI tools may and may not be used on the projects. If you are ever unsure whether something is permitted, ask us before doing it; we would much rather answer a question in advance than deal with a problem afterward.

Diversity and Inclusion

Cognitive Science stands to benefit from a diversity of perspectives and experiences. After all, we are studying how minds work, and all of us have different minds shaped by different experiences. We are committed to supporting diversity and inclusion in all aspects of this course, though we will most likely pursue this goal imperfectly. We would love to hear your suggestions about ways to increase support for diversity and inclusion in this course, and our doors are always open if you want to talk.

Syllabus and Readings

Date	Topic	Readings
Week 1		
Sept 14 (JP/FC)	1. Introduction to Cognitive Science	• Suggested background: Purugganan & Hewitt, How to read a scientific article • Suggested background: Roediger & Gallo, Reading journal articles in cognitive psychology • Suggested background: Pryor, Guidelines on reading philosophy • Suggested background: Pryor, Guidelines on writing a philosophy paper
Sept 16 (FC)	2. What happens when minds break?	• Rafal (2002) "Balint's Syndrome" • Sacks "Speed" • Sacks Fresh Air interview: https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=10115666 • Video: Clive and amnesia
Sept 18 (JP)	3. Evolution and the nature vs. nurture debate	• Buckner, R. The Brain is a bag of tricks: https://vimeo.com/65200081 • Sugita, Y. (2008). Face perception in monkeys reared with no exposure to faces. <i>Proc. of the National Academy of Sciences</i>, 105, 394-398. • Turkheimer, E., Haley, A., Waldron, M., D'Onofrio, B., & Gottesman, I. I. (2003). Socioeconomic status modifies heritability of IQ in young children. <i>Psychological Science</i>, 14(6), 623-628. • Optional: Fodor, J. 1985. <i>Precis to Modularity of Mind</i>, Behavioral and Brain Sciences, 8, 1-5
Week 2		
Sept 21 (FC)	4. Computation in Cognitive Science	• Carandini (2012) From circuits to behavior: A bridge too far? • Crane (2015) Computers and Thought, pp. 83-114. • A turing machine: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E3keLeMwfHY • Cobb (2020) Why your brain is not a computer • Optional: Pylyshyn (1998) What is cognitive science?
Sept 23 (FC)	<i>Discussion and review</i>	• Cog Sci group introductions • In-class quiz and discussion • Working with Turing machines
Sept 25 (JP)	5. What does your brain have to do with it?	• Manning. (2022) Identifying stimulus-driven neural activity patterns in multi-patient intracranial recordings. • Nishimoto, S., Vu, A. T., Naselaris, T., Benjamini, Y., Yu, B., & Gallant, J. L. (2011). Reconstructing Visual Experiences from Brain Activity Evoked by Natural Movies. <i>Current Biology</i>, 21(19), 1641-1646. • Pereira, F., Lou, B., Pritchett, B., Ritter, S., Gershman, S. J., Kanwisher, N., Botvinick, M., & Fedorenko, E. (2018). Toward a universal decoder of linguistic meaning from brain activation. <i>Nature Communications</i>, 9(1), 963. • Weisberg et al. (2008) The seductive allure of neuroscience explanations, <i>Journal of cognitive Neuroscience</i>, 20(3), 470-477.
Week 3		
Sept 28 (JP)	6. How you see the world	• Marr, D. (1982). The Philosophy and the Approach • https://courses.lumenlearning.com/wmopen-psychology/chapter/outcome-vision/ • Sacks, O. "Stereo Sue" New Yorker • Watch this music video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m86ae_e_ptU • Optional: New, J. J., & Scholl, B. J. (2008). 'Perceptual scotomas': A functional account of MIB. <i>Psychological Science</i>, 19, 653-659.
Sept 30 (FC)	7. Limited capacities, attention, and memory	• Hyman Jr, I. E., Boss, S. M., Wise, B. M., McKenzie, K. E., & Caggiano, J. M. (2010). Did you see the unicycling clown? Inattention blindness while walking and talking on a cell phone. <i>Applied Cognitive Psychology</i>, 24(5), 597-607. • Jiang, Y., Costello, P., Fang, F., Huang, M., & He, S. (2006). A gender- and sexual orientation-dependent spatial attentional effect of invisible images. <i>Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences</i>, 103, 17048-17052. • Sacks. (2007) "The Abyss". https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2007/09/24/the-abyss

		● Video: Simons & Levy (1998)
Oct 1 (JP)	<i>X-hour discussion and review</i>	● In-class quiz and discussion ● Turning people into numbers: Please complete this survey: https://dartmouth.co1.qualtrics.com/ife/form/SV_OJkPMtONd1IG8iW
Week 4		
Oct 5 (JP)	8. Cognitive Science of Design (and how to give a good presentation)	● Build a tower, build a team (TED talk) ● Lateral Thinking, Edward de Bono ● Oviatt, Sharon. "Human-centered design meets cognitive load theory: designing interfaces that help people think." Proceedings of the 14th ACM international conference on Multimedia. 2006.
Oct 7 (FC)	9. Concepts and conceptual development	● Carey, S. 2009. <i>The origin of concepts</i>. Chapter 4: Core cognition: number. pp 117-141. ● Feigenson, L., Carey, S., & Hauser, M. (2002). The representations underlying infants' choice of more: Object files versus analog magnitudes. <i>Psychological Science</i>, 13(2), 150-156.
Oct 8	<i>X-hour</i>	Project 1: In-class project sketches (12:15 pm – 12:55 pm)
Oct 9 (FC)	10. Learning (a language)	● Friedmann & Rusou (2015). Critical period for first language: the crucial role of language input during the first year of life. <i>Current Opinion in Neurobiology</i>, 35: 27-34. ● Kuhl (2000). A new view of language acquisition. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences 97.22 ● http://mentalfloss.com/article/62584/will-we-all-speak-emoji-language-couple-years ● Optional: Chomsky, N. (1959), "Review of Skinner's Verbal Behavior", Reprinted from <i>Language</i>, 35.
Week 5		
Oct 12 (JP)	11. Understanding (a language)	● Adger, D. (2019). Chapters 1 and 3 of <i>Language Unlimited</i>. ● Hofstadter, D. (2018). The shallowness of Google Translate. <i>The Atlantic</i>. ● Chomsky, N. (2023). The False Promise of ChatGPT. <i>New York Times</i>.
Oct 13		Project 1 group presentation and feedback due! (before midnight)
Oct 14 (FC)	<i>Discussion and Review</i>	● In-class quiz and discussion ● The graded Turing Test
Oct 15	<i>X-hour</i>	X-hour review session will be held for the midterm (12:15 pm – 12:55 pm)
Oct 16	Midterm	Midterm! (held during regular class period)
Week 6		
Oct 19 (FC)	12. Inference	● Groopman, J. What's the trouble? ● Griffiths, T. L., & Tenenbaum, J. B. (2006). Optimal predictions in everyday cognition. <i>Psychological Science</i>, 17(9), 767-773. ● Gopnik TED talk: https://www.ted.com/talks/alison_gopnik_what_do_babies_think ● Optional: Tversky, A., & Kahneman, D. (1974). Judgment under uncertainty: Heuristics and biases. <i>Science</i>, 185(4157), 1124-1131.
Oct 21 (JP)	13. Theory of Mind	● Dennett, D. C. (1981). <i>True believers</i>: The intentional strategy and why it works. ● Jara-Ettinger, J., Gweon, H., Schulz, L. E., & Tenenbaum, J. B. (2016). The naïve utility calculus: Computational principles underlying commonsense psychology. <i>Trends in Cognitive Sciences</i>, 20(8), 589-604.
Oct 23 (FC)	14. Emotion	● Robert Frank (1988): <i>Passions within Reason</i>, Pages 43-56. ● Lisa Feldman Barrett TEDx talk: https://www.ted.com/talks/lisa_feldman_barrett_you_aren_t_at_the_mercy_of_your_emotions_your_brain_creates_them ● Aviezer, H., Trope, Y., & Todorov, A. (2012). Body cues, not facial expressions, discriminate between intense positive and negative emotions. <i>Science</i>, 338(6111), 1225-1229.

		• Belin et al. (2017) Simple shapes elicit different emotional responses in children with Autism Spectrum Disorder and neurotypical children and adults. <i>Frontiers in psychology</i>. 8, 91 • Saxe, R., & Houlihan, S. D. (2017). Formalizing emotion concepts within a Bayesian model of theory of mind. <i>Current Opinion in Psychology</i>, 17, 15-21.
Week 7		
Oct 26 (FC)	<i>Discussion and Review</i>	• In-class quiz and discussion • Trying out sentiment analysis
Oct 28 (JP)	15. Cooperation	• Rand, D. G., & Nowak, M. A. (2013). Human cooperation. <i>Trends in Cognitive Sciences</i>, 17(8), 413-425. • Play this: https://ncase.me/trust/
Oct 30 (JP)	16. Morality	• Greene, J. D., Sommerville, R. B., Nystrom, L. E., Darley, J. M., & Cohen, J. D. (2001). An fMRI investigation of emotional engagement in moral judgment. <i>Science</i>, 293(5537), 2105-2108. • Bloom, P. The moral life of babies.
Week 8		
Nov 2 (JP)	<i>Discussion and Review</i>	• In-class quiz and discussion • Economic games day!!
Nov 4 (FC)	17. Decision Making	• Kahneman, D. <i>Thinking fast and slow</i>, Ch. 26: Prospect theory. • Gerd Gigerenzer TEDx talk: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Lg7G8TMe_A • Ariely, D. Thoughts about the Subprime Mortgage Crisis and Its Consequences. • Mowinckel et al. (2015) A meta-analysis of decision-making and attention in adults with ADHD. <i>Journal of attention disorders</i>. 19(5) • Optional: Gold, J. I., & Shadlen, M. N. (2007). The neural basis of decision making. <i>Annu. Rev. Neurosci.</i>, 30, 535-574.
Nov 5	<i>X-hour</i>	Project 2: In-class project sketches (12:15 pm – 12:55 pm)
Nov 6 (FC)	18. Go!	• https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WXuK6gekU1Y • Machine Learning for Beginners: An Introduction to Neural Networks.
Week 9		
Nov 9 (JP)	19. Artificial intelligence	• How computer vision works: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OcycT1Jwsns • The Dark Secret at the Heart of AI - <i>MIT Technology Review</i> • How researchers are teaching AI to learn like a child. <i>Science</i>.
Nov 10		Project 2 group presentation and feedback due! (by midnight)
Nov 11 (JP)	20. Big questions and final frontiers	• Soon, C. S., Brass, M., Heinze, H. J., & Haynes, J. D. (2008). Unconscious determinants of free decisions in the human brain. <i>Nature Neuroscience</i>, 11(5), 543-545. • Roskies, A. (2006). Neuroscientific challenges to free will and responsibility. <i>Trends in Cognitive Sciences</i>. 10(9), 419-423. • Owen, A. M., Coleman, M. R., Boly, M., Davis, M. H., Laureys, S., & Pickard, J. D. (2006). Detecting awareness in the vegetative state. <i>Science</i>, 313(5792), 1402. • Nagel, T. (1974). What is it like to be a bat? <i>Philosophical Review</i>, 83(4), 435-450.
Nov 12	<i>X-hour</i>	X-hour review session will be held for the final, from 12:15 pm – 1:05 pm
Nov 13 (JP/FC)	21. Cognitive science at Dartmouth!	• Kemeny, J. (1955) Man Viewed as a Machine. <i>Scientific American</i> • A Proposal for the Dartmouth Summer Research Project on Artificial Intelligence
Nov 14		Formal presentation due! (by midnight)
Week 10 and beyond		
Nov 16 (FC)	22. Wrap up	What have we learned? Where do we go next?

Nov 17		<i>Formal writeup due! (by midnight)</i>
Nov 20-24		Final Exam!! (during the Nov 20-24 exam period; date, time, and location TBD)

Additional Support for your Learning

[Academic Skills Center](#) (ASC): Open to the entire Dartmouth community, the ASC assists students in achieving their academic goals through tutoring and learning skills trainings.

[The Writing Center](#) is a free support service that is dedicated to helping students through all stages of the writing process and at any point in their undergraduate careers. In one-on-one appointments, peer tutors use facilitative approaches to engage students in active dialogue about writing and help them grow as writers. Tutors can help students develop strategies for generating ideas, find and evaluate research sources, outline and organize information, and revise completed drafts. Students may schedule an appointment with a peer tutor by visiting [WOnline](#).

[Dartmouth College Library](#): The Dartmouth College Library provides support through subject area specialization, course materials and reserves, reservable learning spaces, workshops & classes for students, research, scholarly publication, copyright, media, book arts, and more. The Library's [Research Guides](#) by subject area and your discipline's [subject librarian](#) are sources of specialized help for your course and students.

Student Accessibility and Accommodations

Students requesting disability-related accommodations and services for this course are required to register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS; [Apply for Services webpage](#); student.accessibility.services@dartmouth.edu; 1-603-646-9900) and to request that an accommodation email be sent to me in advance of the need for an accommodation. Then, students should schedule a follow-up meeting with me to determine relevant details such as what role SAS or its [Testing Center](#) may play in accommodation implementation. This process works best for everyone when completed as early in the quarter as possible. If students have questions about whether they are eligible for accommodations or have concerns about the implementation of their accommodations, they should contact the SAS office. All inquiries and discussions will remain confidential.

Title IX

At Dartmouth, we value integrity, responsibility, and respect for the rights and interests of others, all central to our Principles of Community. We are dedicated to establishing and maintaining a safe and inclusive campus where all community members have equal access to Dartmouth's educational and employment opportunities. We strive to promote an environment of sexual respect, safety, and well-being. Through the Sexual and Gender-Based Misconduct Policy (SMP), Dartmouth demonstrates that sex and gender-based discrimination, sex and gender-based harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, stalking, etc., are not tolerated in our community.

For more information regarding Title IX and to access helpful resources, visit eoatix.dartmouth.edu. As a faculty member, I am required to share disclosures of sexual or gender-based misconduct with the Office of Equal Opportunity, Accessibility, and Title IX (EOATIX).

If you have any questions or want to explore options for support and assistance, please contact the EOATIX office at 603-646-0922 or equal.opportunity.accessibility.and.title.ix@dartmouth.edu. Speaking to the EOATIX office does not automatically initiate a college resolution. Instead, much of their work is centered around providing supportive measures to ensure you can continue to engage in Dartmouth's programs and activities.

Religious Observances

Dartmouth has a deep commitment to support students' religious observances and diverse faith practices. Some students may wish to take part in religious observances that occur during this academic term. If you have a religious observance that conflicts with your participation in the course, please meet with me as soon as possible—before the end of the second week of the term at the latest—to discuss appropriate course adjustments.

Mental Health and Wellness

The academic environment is challenging, our terms are intensive, and classes are not the only demanding part of your life. There are a number of resources available to you on campus to support your wellness, including: the [Counseling Center](#) which allows you to book triage appointments online, the [Student Wellness Center](#) which offers wellness check-ins, and your [undergraduate dean](#). The student-led [Dartmouth Student Mental Health Union](#) and their peer support program may be helpful if you would like to speak to a trained fellow student support listener. If you need immediate assistance, please contact the counselor on-call at (603) 646-9442 at any time. Please make me aware of anything that will hinder your success in this course.

Consent to recording of course and group office hours

(1) Consent to recording of course meetings and office hours that are open to multiple students.

By enrolling in this course,

a) I affirm my understanding that the instructor may record meetings of this course and any associated meetings open to multiple students and the instructor, including but not limited to scheduled and ad hoc office hours and other consultations, within any digital platform, including those used to offer remote instruction for this course.

b) I further affirm that the instructor owns the copyright to their instructional materials, of which these recordings constitute a part, and my distribution of any of these recordings in whole or in part to any person or entity other than other members of the class without prior written consent of the instructor may be subject to discipline by Dartmouth up to and including separation from Dartmouth.

(2) Requirement of consent to one-on-one recordings

By enrolling in this course, I hereby affirm that I will not make a recording in any medium of any one-on-one meeting with the instructor or another member of the class or group of members of the class without obtaining the prior written consent of all those participating, and I understand that if I violate this prohibition, I will be subject to discipline by Dartmouth up to and including separation from Dartmouth, as well as any other civil or criminal penalties under applicable law. I understand that an exception to this consent applies to accommodations approved by SAS for a student's disability, and that one or more students in a class may record class lectures, discussions, lab sessions, and review sessions and take pictures of essential information, and/or be provided class notes for personal study use only.

If you have questions, please contact the Office of the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences.