Minds and Brains in America

Instructor: Henry Cowles

4 credits
HU
lec (TTH 2:30-4 pm) + dis

Course Guide Shortcut: bit.ly/fa18_hist265

What is the mind? And how does it relate to the brain? These are old, even ancient questions, but it is only in the last two centuries that specific scientific fields have arisen to answer them. This course explores the history of those fields (psychology, psychiatry, and cognitive science) and their impact on American politics, popular culture, and private life.

The science and medicine of mind and brain have deeply shaped who we are, what we do, and how we treat others (including people, animals, and machines). This course examines key moments in this history: from the rise of the asylum and phrenology around 1800, through the growth of eugenics and psychoanalysis a century later, to the advent of fMRI and artificial intelligence in recent years. By tracing the tools used to study, police, and alter the minds and brains of ordinary Americans, we will work toward a new history of scientific authority in the United States.