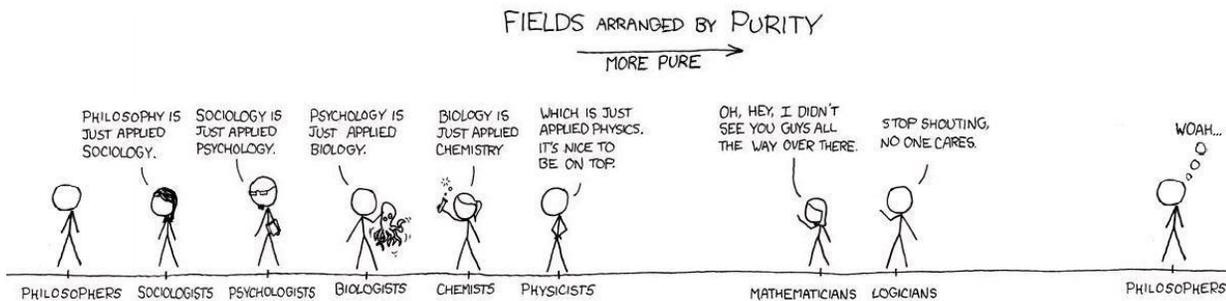


# Is Psychology a Science?



The question above is hotly debated in the media and academic circles. To ground us before we begin digging into actual psychological studies and content, we are going to spend a few weeks digging into this question, with an eye towards how psychological research is conducted, what methods are used, and ultimately, where psychology should fall in terms of disciplinary categorization. This is a key grounding in the course, as you will be using the frameworks and knowledge developed here to evaluate psychological studies throughout the course, and ultimately to design your own study in Semester 2.

## The Big Questions:

1. What makes a discipline a “science” anyway? Why is the scientific approach important?
2. What methods do psychology researchers use to conduct their research? What are the strengths and limitations of these different methods?
3. How do you make a psychological experiment that can actually tell us something useful?
4. Is psychology a science?

## The Smaller Questions:

**RESEARCH** RESEARCH METHODS + THEORY



QUANTITATIVE



QUALITATIVE

1. What’s the difference between quantitative and qualitative research methods?
2. What are the strengths and limitations of a qualitative/quantitative approach to research?

### Qualitative Research

1. What are the effects of participant expectations and researcher bias in qualitative research?
2. Why is credibility important? What effect does triangulation have on credibility?
3. What is reflexivity in qualitative research?
4. What are three main methods of gathering data? For each of the three main methods:
  - a. What are the strengths and limitations of this research method?

### Quantitative Research

1. What are the key features of a scientific experiment?
2. What's the difference between correlation and causation? How are these ideas useful in psychology, and how are they applied using different research methods?
3. What's the difference between an independent and dependent variable?
4. How do we evaluate a psychological experiment? What questions do we ask?
5. What are the different factors in experiment design and execution that could make an experiment more or less useful?

### Ethics

1. What makes an experiment or a study ethical or unethical?

## Assessment

There will be two major forms of assessment for this topic.

1. **Assessment 1: Quiz.** Your study guide is the list of questions above. We will spend a bit of time in class developing study strategies. You should be prepared for any of the above! This will go in the grading category "Are you learning the content?"
2. **Assessment 2: Seminar/Reflection.** We will have a seminar at the end of this topic on the question, "Is psychology a science." Your performance in the seminar and on the written reflection will be the second major assessment. This will go in the grading category, "Are you applying your knowledge?"