

Psychology as a Profession in Australia (Book Review)

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BOOK REVIEW

Psychology as a profession in Australia – O’Gorman, J. Brisbane: Australian Academic Press, 2007. 188pp. ISBN 978-1-875378-82-1.

Psychology as a profession in Australia is written primarily for students studying psychology in the third, fourth or postgraduate years, but certain chapters of the book are also relevant for first year students who may be taking psychology as an elective or as a core subject in another discipline. For example Chapters 1–3 and perhaps Chapter 10 might be useful chapters for those students not sure about whether they wish to pursue a career in psychology. These chapters set the scene for thinking about what psychology might be, about science, practice and professionalism, and about psychology and social responsibility. These chapters would allow students in non-psychology courses to have a brief overview of the origins of psychology and its many applications, as well as provide them with an alternate professional discipline to compare with their own.

Chapters 4–6 are more helpful for those students who are seriously considering studying psychology as a career. Chapter 4 situates how psychology as a profession is similar to, and different from, other professions. These chapters also outline current expectations regarding training and the competencies required for psychological practice. Although some third year students might find these chapters interesting, it is not quite so easy to see where this content might be introduced in the current under-graduate psychology curricula. Certainly these chapters would be very helpful for fourth year students.

In Chapter 7 Professor O’Gorman introduces the importance of ethics and good practice. This chapter provides an introduction to ethics, codes of ethics, an overview of confidentiality and dual relationships, and the relationship between professional codes and the health rights authority, and criminal and civil law. Despite some of the text in Chapter 8 being already out of date (the Australian Psychological Society revised its code of ethics in 2007 and now describes its general principles

differently), students would still benefit from reading this particular chapter. Chapter 8 describes the representation and regulation of psychology in Australia, highlighting both the important role the professional societies have taken in terms of progressing the development and recognition of psychology in Australia and the legislative requirements for practising as a psychologist.

Chapters 9–11 provide both students and psychologists alike the opportunity to reflect on psychology in Australia, its image, social responsibility as a discipline and profession, and psychology's future. These chapters could complement a fourth year course in professional psychology, as well as being helpful for postgraduate students, but could also be of value to psychologists who are interested in how the public sees psychology, the future education and training of psychologists, and with respect to the bigger picture of the role and place of psychology, psychologists, and social responsibility.

Convenors of fourth year psychology courses may wish to set Psychology as a profession in Australia as a required text. I can see this book as being useful particularly for fourth year students in programs in which there is a dedicated professional issues course at fourth year. The book could also be one that students might be reasonably expected to selectively peruse at different stages of their training (as suggested above). Postgraduate students might also find the book helpful when thinking about their profession, their training and their future as a professional, and could be required reading for their first year of their postgraduate training.

Psychology as a profession in Australia is a very timely book. Professor O'Gorman brings an informed and insightful overview of the development of psychology as a profession in Australia. His substantial experience in a variety of positions including academic and research psychologist, organisational psychologist, military psychologist, head of schools of psychology, dean in faculties of arts and health sciences, his considerable involvement with the Australian Psychological Society, and his experience as Chair of the Psychologists Registration Board of Queensland enables Professor O'Gorman to provide an encompassing overview of the development of psychology from a very

broad and informed perspective. This in itself makes Psychology as a profession in Australia well worth reading. The forthcoming changes to national accreditation and national registration, as well as pressures both within psychology and from outside regarding reviews of our training and curricula, make it both necessary and indeed very helpful for academics and practising psychologists to take the time to reflect on the beginnings of psychology in Australia, and the journey it has taken so far.

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