Our survival (and the good life) depends on effective gathering of huge amounts of information, adequate processing, fast learning, and controlling the environment to secure predictability and adjustment. Our brain selects what to attend to, categorize and integrate perceptual input, makes inferences, establishes emotional and physical reactions to environmental cues, and activating all other systems (affective, behavioral, and physiological) with staggering speed and efficiency. These cognitive feats are executed extremely quickly and accurately with the help of mental short-cuts called heuristics. The concept of cognitive heuristics has caught on fire recently, infiltrating areas such as economics, music, ethics, social behavior, perception, problem solving, legal reasoning, categorization, rationality, mental health, attention and learning, and even some self-help literature. This course presents students with an opportunity to investigate this relatively new and highly useful theoretical construct, from its conceptual analysis to theoretical and pragmatic applications of its models to self-awareness as a cognitive agent.

Leah Savion is a member of the Philosophy and of the Cognitive Science departments at Indiana University at Bloomington, since 1989. She earned her Ph.D. in philosophy at City University of NY writing about the logic of belief attributions. Her areas of interest range from analytic philosophy and formal logic, cognitive science and the scholarship of teaching and learning, to international folk dance, gumboot, singing and tennis. Leah has offered well over 140 presentations and workshops on philosophical, cognitive science, and pedagogy related topics in the IU system, and in universities around the world. She continuously develops new courses in philosophy and in cognitive science, has won numerous teaching awards and grants over the years. Here current research topics are (i) cognitively realistic models of rationality, (ii) heuristics and biases in concept acquisition, retention, and retrieval, (iii) cognitive differences between experts and novices, and (iv) brief perseverance and self-deception, (v) cognition and rationality in business and law.

READING SOURCES
- The course packet, written by the instructor
- Eight original papers by philosophers, cognitive scientists, and social scientists, made available on Oncourse
- Guided research material assembled by students for their team projects
- Selected focused material for each student’s treasure-hunt and final thesis Micro-thematic team presentation: in-depth analysis of some aspect of the material covered in the course packet or in the original papers. Treasure Hunt and final research paper: individual presentation of issues not (sufficiently) covered in class; paper with an original thesis or synthesis is due in the last week of classes. Team project/presentation of researched topic in cognitive science, sociology, philosophy, animal cognition, legal reasoning, economics, or linguistic. Team papers are due a week after class presentation. Educational videos on belief perseverance, scientific frameworks, development, fallibility of eyewitness testimony, and cognitive gender differences. Experiments and interviews to illuminate and analyze misconceptions, biases, and the sources of belief perseverance. International folk dancing, outdoor tennis, racket-ball, and kickboxing.