



Woo-kyoung Ahn

Topics

Business and Management, Mind and Brain

Travels From

Connecticut, Singapore

Bio

Woo-Kyoung Ahn is the John Hay Whitney Professor of Psychology at Yale University. After receiving her Ph.D. in psychology from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign in 1990, she was assistant professor at Yale University and associate professor at Vanderbilt University. Ahn has been teaching her courses on thinking for over 30 years, and she has consistently received one of the highest course evaluations ratings from the students in any university she taught. In 2022, Ahn received Lex Hixon Prize for teaching excellence in the social sciences, which is the highest honor in teaching at Yale University. In 2019, her “Thinking” course was the most popular course at Yale University, drawing over 450 students. She published a book, titled “Thinking 101: How to think better to live better”, based on some of the lectures covered in the course. For her research, Ahn has been studying thinking and reasoning, such as causal learning, concepts, judgments, and inferences. She studies not only basic research but also applied issues, such as how mental health clinicians and laypeople conceptualize mental disorders and how genetic attributions of mental disorders can mislead us. Her research on

thinking biases has been funded by the National Institutes of Health, and she is a fellow of the American Psychological Association and the Association for Psychological Science. Read more about Woo-Kyoung Ahn in her [CV](#).

SPEECHES

Thinking 101: How to Think Better to Live Better There are many thinking errors that we commit, but merely knowing what they are doesn't always prevent us from repeating those errors. For example, consider confirmation bias, a tendency to seek only the evidence that confirms one's belief. During the talk, it will be demonstrated that even those who may have heard of confirmation bias can easily fall for it. Various real-life examples will be presented, including what happens when a person learns about their genetic profiles and how this bias leads to inequality in the society even when one does not have any prejudice. Then, it will be discussed why we have evolved to have such biases in thinking. Finally, scientifically tested methods of counteracting the bias will be explained, along with other actionable strategies one can adopt in real-life.

What Can Go Wrong in Clinicians' and Clients' Minds When Mental Disorders Are Biologically Explained...And What Can Be Done About It Mental disorders are increasingly understood in terms of biological mechanisms. What are psychological consequences of explaining Major Depression, for instance, in terms of chemical imbalance or genetic predisposition rather than traumatic, stressful events? It has been generally considered that biological explanations for mental illnesses would reduce blame on those who suffer from them. However, we discovered a number of unintended negative consequences of construing mental disorders in terms of biological mechanisms. This talk will review some of these pitfalls and ways to avoid them from the clinicians' and patients' perspectives.

BOOKS



HARDCOVER

[Thinking 101](#) How to Reason Better to Live Better

Flatiron Books

Psychologist Woo-kyoung Ahn devised a course at Yale called “Thinking” to help students examine the biases that cause so many problems in their daily lives. It quickly became one of the university’s most popular courses. Now, for the first time, Ahn presents key insights from her years of teaching and research in a book for everyone.

REVIEWS: “As a psychiatrist who very much believes in the biopsychosocial model of mental disorders, I enjoyed your talk at the Low Country MH Conference.”

—Low Country MH Conference clinician

“I have become one of your fans. I really enjoyed your presentation, your knowledge, and your personality of humbleness.”

—Low Country MH Conference clinician

Praise for Thinking 101 “An INVALUABLE RESOURCE to anyone who wants to think better.”

—Gretchen Rubin

Award-winning YALE PROFESSOR Woo-kyoung Ahn delivers “A MUST-READ—a smart and compellingly readable guide to cutting-edge research into how people think.”

-Paul Bloom

“A FUN exploration.”

—Dax Shepard