

EDGAR DUBOURG

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POSITIONS & EDUCATION

2026–2029	AI Research Fellow Paris School of AI, PSL. Three-year research fellowship.
2025–2028	Postdoctoral Fellow in Health Psychology & Artificial Intelligence Institut Curie, PSL, Paris. Funded by the Google–PSL initiative “AI for Societal Impact”. Supervisor: V. Chambon.
2020–2025	PhD in Cognitive Science Institut Jean Nicod, École normale supérieure-PSL, Paris. Supervisor: N. Baumard. Frontiers in Cognition Studentship.
2017–2019	Master in Literary Theory & Philosophy École normale supérieure-PSL / Sorbonne & EHESS, Paris. Highest honors.
2012–2015	Bachelor’s Degree in Human & Social Sciences Sciences Po Paris.

FUNDINGS & AWARDS

2026	Paris School of AI Fellowship Three-year research fellowship (~120k €).
2024	PSL–Google “AI for Societal Impact” Post-doctoral grant, 160k €. Supervisor: V. Chambon.
2024	ANR Collaborative Research (named collaborator) Measuring Agency in Gamified Interactive Contexts, 340k €. PIs: V. Chambon, C. Chevallier.
2021	Poster Award finalist Human Behavior and Evolution Society (HBES).
2020	Frontiers in Cognition Studentship Fully funded 5-year PhD.

PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLES

16. Dubourg, E., Thouzeau, V., Beuchot, T., Bonard, C., Boyer, P., Chevallier, C., Clasen, M., Boon-Falleur, M., Fiorio, G., Fitouchi, L., Fisher, M., Gantman, A., Grant, A., Hye-Knudsen, M., Katiyar, T., Kjeldgaard-Christiansen, J., Mercier, M., Mercier, H., Morin, O., Salmon, C., Scott-Phillips, T., Scrivner, C., Sijlmassi, A., Singh, M., Smith, M., Sobchuk, O., Stubbersfield, J., Varnum, M., van Mulukom, V., Verpooten, J., Wylie, J., Zhong, Y., Baumard, N. (2026). Carving Stories at their Natural Joints. Accepted at *Psychological Review*.
15. Avenel, J., Chevallier, C., Dubourg, E. (2026). Beyond One-Size-Fits-All: Personalising Health Communication to Drive Real Behaviour Change. *Quarterly Medical Review*.
14. Dubourg, E.*, Jach, H.*, Beuchot, T., Smillie, L., Baumard, N. (2026). Openness to Experience: From Ecology to Culture. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*.
13. Dubourg, E., Scrivner, C. (2026). Vulnerability and the computational logic of fear: Insights from the horror genre. *Evolution and Human Behavior*.
12. Dubourg, E., Thouzeau, V., Borredon, Q., Baumard, N. (2025). Quantifying and explaining the rise of fiction. *Evolutionary Human Sciences*.
11. Dubourg, E., Safa, R., Thouzeau, V., Baumard, N. (2025). Charting the rise of imaginary worlds in history. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*.

10. **Dubourg, E.**, Dheilly, T., Morin, O.†, Mercier, H.† (2025). People use the nested structure of knowledge to infer what others know. *Psychological Science*.
9. Mercier, M., **Dubourg, E.**, Mercier, H. (2025). Insight-seeking is consistent across domains and distinct from other forms of curiosity. *Personality and Individual Differences*.
8. Borredon, Q.*, Bulamac, Z.*, (...), Morin, O.†, **Dubourg, E.**† (2025). Did teddy bears culturally evolve to be cuter? A preregistered replication. *Journal of Cognition and Culture*.
7. **Dubourg, E.**, Chambon, V. (2025). DEEP: A model of gaming preferences informed by the hierarchical nature of goal-oriented cognition. *Entertainment Computing*.
6. **Dubourg, E.**, Thouzeau, V., Baumard, N. (2024). A Step-By-Step Method for Cultural Annotation by LLMs. *Frontiers in Artificial Intelligence*.
5. **Dubourg, E.**, Baumard, N. (2024). Does curiosity vary with ecological contexts? A correlational study with socio-economic status. *Evolutionary Behavioral Sciences*.
4. **Dubourg, E.**, Thouzeau, V., Baumard, N. (2024). The psychological origins of science fiction. *Poetics*.
3. **Dubourg, E.**, Thouzeau, V., de Dampierre, C., Mogoutov, A., Baumard, N. (2023). Exploratory preferences explain the human fascination for imaginary worlds in fictional stories. *Scientific Reports*.
2. **Dubourg, E.**, Baumard, N. (2022). Why Imaginary Worlds? The psychological foundations and cultural evolution of fictions with imaginary worlds. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* (Target Article).
1. **Dubourg, E.**, Baumard, N. (2022). Why and How Did Narrative Fictions Evolve? Fictions as Entertainment Technologies. *Frontiers in Psychology*.

COMMENTARIES

7. Baumard, N., André, J.-B., **Dubourg, E.** (2026). From attractors to ecological strategies: Embedding subjective selection in an evolutionary-ecological framework. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*. Commentary on Singh (2025).
6. **Dubourg, E.**, Baumard, N. (2025). Distinguishing regulatory variables and ecological affordances. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*. Commentary on Ko & Neuberg (2025).
5. **Dubourg, E.**, Chambon, V., Baumard, N. (2024). Human motivation is organized hierarchically, from proximal (means) to ultimate (ends). *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*. Commentary on Murayama & Jach (2024).
4. **Dubourg, E.**, Baumard, N. (2022). Imaginary Worlds through the Evolutionary Lens. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*. Response to commentaries on Dubourg & Baumard (2022).
3. **Dubourg, E.**†, Fitouchi, L.†, Baumard, N. (2022). When instrumental inference hides behind seemingly arbitrary conventions. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*. Commentary on Jagiello et al. (2022).
2. **Dubourg, E.**, André, J.-B., Baumard, N. (2021). The Evolution of Music: One Trait, Many Ultimate-Level Explanations. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*. Commentary on Mehr et al. & Savage et al. (2021).
1. **Dubourg, E.** (2021). Les mondes imaginaires dans les fictions. *Acta Fabula*. Commentary on Besson (2015).

BOOK CHAPTERS & PROCEEDINGS

- Dubourg, E.**, Mogoutov, A., Baumard, N. (2023). Is Cinema Becoming Less and Less Innovative With Time? *Proceedings of the Computational Humanities Research Conference*.
- Dubourg, E.**, Baumard, N. (2023). Do fictions impact beliefs? A critical view. *Handbook of Fiction and Belief*.
- Dubourg, E.**, André, J.-B., Baumard, N. (2021). L'origine des fictions : l'hypothèse des fonctions évolutives sociales. *Fabula LbT*.
- Dubourg, E.** (2020). La Reconnaissance intuitive des fictions. XXI-XX, *Reconnaissance littéraire*, Classiques Garnier.
- Dubourg, E.** (2020). La Conquête de la Fiction. *Romanesques*, Classiques Garnier.

BOOK

Histoire naturelle de la fiction. HumenSciences (September 2025, in French).

PREPRINTS & UNDER REVIEW

- Dubourg, E.**, Thouzeau, V. The Double Edge of AI Annotation in Cultural Sciences. Under review.
- Dubourg, E.**, Altay, S. Agentic AI as epistemic tools. *PsyArXiv*.

Dubourg, E., Thouzeau, V., Freynet, R., Darcy, G., Beuchot, T., Noël, N., Chevallier, C., Baumard, N. Personality structure predicts story preferences across 23 countries. *PsyArXiv*.

Maunoir, P., Chambon, V., Baumard, N., Thouzeau, V., **Dubourg, E.** Motivational Alignment, Not Demographic Similarity, Predicts Narrative Interest. *PsyArXiv*.

Dubourg, E., Chevallier, C., Chambon, V. Preferred Levels of Agency: The Development and Validation of the Goal Abstraction Preference (GAP) Scale. *PsyArXiv*.

Avenel, J., Bidant, E., Pasquereau, A., Guignard, R., Nguyen-Thanh, V., Chevallier, C., Nettle, D., **Dubourg, E.** Motivational content features improve tailoring of anti-smoking advertisements. *PsyArXiv*.

Hye-Knudsen, M., **Dubourg, E.** Cues of benignity explain why some misfortunes are funny. Under review.

Salouhou, S., **Dubourg, E.**, Scott-Slade, M., Spiers, H., Coutrot, A. From Players to Participants: Citizen Science and Video Games to Understand Cognition. *arXiv*.

Abdeljaouad, S., **Dubourg, E.**, Baumard, N. The Rise of the Morally Ambiguous Protagonist. Under review.

Dubourg, E., Lie-Panis, J., Thouzeau, V., Chevallier, C., Kowal, M., Sorokowski, P., Baumard, N. The Paradox of Modern Love: Why Romantic Signals Decline in Developed Societies. Under review.

TEACHING

Spring 2026	AI & Cognition (30h) PSL International Bachelor of Sciences in Artificial Intelligence.
Fall 2025, 2026	Social & Behavioral Sciences (45h, with N. Baumard) PSL “AI & Society” Graduate Program.
Fall 2022–2027	Psychology of Fiction (30h) PSL CPES undergraduate program.
Fall 2024	Methods in Cultural Evolution (30h, TA of O. Morin) Cognitive Science Master, École normale supérieure-PSL.
2022	Data Science and Pop Culture (16h) PSL Week intensive course.

Guest lectures

- “Personalization in Health” (Oct 2025). Master in Health Engineering, ESPCI-PSL.
- “Fiction, Horror & Fear” (Sep 2025, with M. Clasen). Master in Cognitive Sciences, ENS-PSL.
- “Variation in the Preference for Imaginary Worlds” (Jan 2025). Master in Cognitive Science, ENS-PSL.
- “The Cultural Evolution of Fiction: Theory and Methods” (2023, 2024). Cultural Analytics, University of Trento, Italy.
- “Theory and statistics in the study of fiction” (Sep 2023). CPES Louis-Le-Grand, PSL.
- “Environment, personality, and culture” (Apr 2023). Sustainability Sciences, PSL.
- “Preferences for fiction and adaptive plasticity” (Nov 2022, Mar 2022). Master in Cognitive Sciences, ENS-PSL.
- “From cognitive domains to cultural artefacts” (Nov 2022). Evolutionary cognitive sciences, CPES, PSL.
- “Fiction interpretation and the relevance framework” (Apr 2022). Art and Cognitive Science, CPES, PSL.
- “An adaptive framework to study human emotions” (Mar 2021, with L. Kaci). French Brain Awareness Week.

Student supervision. T. Alabdeen Ali (2026), N. Noël (2026), M. Mirosavic (2026), P. Maunoir-Guérin (2025–26), E. Bidant (2025), R. Fraynet (2025), N. Ryszfeld (2024), R. Safa (2024), Q. Borredon (2023).

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS & POSTERS

- “Personality, Cognition, and Story Preferences Worldwide” (Nov 2025). Talk. French Society for Evolutionary Human Sciences. Montpellier, France.
- “Why Imaginary Worlds?” (May 2024). Talk. Human Behavior and Evolution Society (HBES) Conference. Aarhus, Denmark.
- “Is cinema becoming less and less innovative with time?” (Dec 2023). Talk. Computational Humanities Research (CHR) Conference. Paris, France.
- “The Cognitive Foundations of Fictional Stories: Further empirical developments” (Jun 2023). Talk. From Evolution to Cognition to Fiction Workshop. ENS-PSL, Paris, France.

- “Leveraging the hierarchical structure of goal-directed cognition to explain the variability of gaming preferences” (May 2023). Flash talk. Forum BrainPlay. Sorbonne Université, Paris, France.
- “Openness to experience: its evolutionary origin and its implication on symbolic culture” (Apr 2023). Talk. Department of Psychology, Royal Holloway, University of London, UK.
- “Cognitive mechanisms activated by fiction: A comprehensive framework” (Apr 2023). Talk. European Human Behavior and Evolution Association (EHBEA) Conference. University of London, UK.
- “Openness to experience: its evolutionary origin and its implication on symbolic culture” (Dec 2022). Flash talk. Evolution, Cognition & Culture workshop. Saint-Jacut, France.
- “Cognitive mechanisms activated by fiction: A comprehensive framework” (Nov 2022). Poster. French Society for Evolutionary Human Sciences. Toulouse, France.
- “A Comprehensive Framework to Study the Psychological Appeal for Narrative Fictions” (Jun 2022). Talk. Workshop “From Cultural Evolution to Computational Humanities”. Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History, Jena, Germany.
- “Exploratory preferences explain the human fascination for imaginary worlds” (Jun 2022). Talk. Workshop “From Cultural Evolution to Computational Humanities”. Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History, Jena, Germany.
- “Experimental evidence suggests that exploratory preferences explain the cultural distribution of fictions with imaginary worlds” (Apr 2022). Poster. European Human Behavior and Evolution Association (EHBEA) Conference. Online.
- “The cultural evolution of non-existent worlds in fictions” (Mar 2022). Talk. ISFFS/SIRFF Second International Conference on Impossible Fictions. University of Chicago. Online.
- “The cultural evolution of imaginary worlds” (Nov 2021). Talk. French Society for Evolutionary Human Sciences, Second annual meeting. Online.
- “Why Imaginary Worlds? Exploratory preferences explain the cultural success of fictions with imaginary worlds in modern societies” (Sep 2021). Poster. European Brain and Behaviour Society (EBBS) Conference. Online.
- “The cultural evolution of imaginary worlds in fictions” (Sep 2021). Short talk. “Leda Cosmides and John Tooby: Honoring 40 years of innovation”. Royaumont, France.
- “Why Imaginary Worlds? ...” (Jun 2021). Poster (Poster Award finalist) & Flash talk. Human Behavior and Evolution Society (HBES) Conference. Online.
- “Why Imaginary Worlds? ...” (Jun 2021). Poster. Culture Conference. Online.
- “Exploratory preferences explain the cultural success of fictions with imaginary worlds” (Mar 2021). Poster. European Human Behavior and Evolution Association (EHBEA) Conference. Online.
- “The cultural evolution of imaginary worlds” (Mar 2021). Short talk. European Human Behavior and Evolution Association (EHBEA) Conference. Online.
- “Why Fiction? An evolutionary and cognitive approach” (Nov 2020). Talk. Workshop Debating Fictions. UNIL Lausanne & Sorbonne Nouvelle, Paris, France.
- “L’évolution culturelle de la comédie au cinéma” (Mar 2020). Talk. Colloquium “State of the art of comedy in France”, Laboratoire LASLAR. Caen, France.

INVITED TALKS & SEMINARS

- “Stories and motivational preferences” (Oct 2025). Talk. Seminar of the Department of Cognitive Science. University of Neuchâtel, Switzerland.
- “A Step-By-Step Method for Cultural Annotation by LLMs” (Nov 2023). 3-hour workshop, with V. Thouzeau. FRESH conference. Paris, France.
- “The role of cognitive mechanisms in the cultural evolution of fictional stories” (May 2023). Talk. Early-career Social Learning Research Seminar Series. Online.
- “Imaginary worlds through the evolutionary lens” (Feb 2023). Talk. Workshop “Exploring the Mind’s Canvas”. Learning Planet Institute, Paris, France.
- “What fictions do people like at different ages? Predictions from evolutionary developmental psychology” (Mar 2022). Talk. Cognitive Development Center Seminar. Central European University. Online.
- “Imaginary Worlds: An Ingredient for Fictional Recipes” (Feb 2022). Talk, with V. Thouzeau. Seminar of the Musée de l’Homme, Paris, France.
- “What lies behind the imagination of fictional worlds?” (Dec 2021). Talk. Seminar of the Imaginary & Morality Lab. Online.

WORKSHOP ORGANIZATION

- Organizer of the International Workshop “From Evolution to Cognition to Fiction” (Jun 2023, Paris), with N. Baumard and V. Thouzeau. Invited speakers included M. Clasen, C. Salmon, L. Zunshine, C. Scrivner, A. Grant, H. Mercier, O. Sobchuk, M. Smith, J. Verpooten, M. Hye-Knudsen, M. Singh, J. Kjeldgaard-Christiansen, O. Morin, M. Fisher.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

- Scientific Advisor at Beyond Games (2021–present) — behavioral-science research and gamification.
- Scientific partnership with Warner Bros. Discovery (2021–2024) — training and consulting in the cognitive science of fiction.
- Student Representative, Institut Jean Nicod (2020–2022).

Reviewing. *Nature, Humanities & Social Sciences Communications, Behavioral & Brain Sciences, Evolutionary Human Sciences, Evolutionary Studies in Imaginary Culture, Review of Philosophy and Psychology, Personality and Individual Differences, Empirical Studies of the Arts, PLOS ONE, American Journal of Psychology, Poetics, Entertainment Computing, Evolutionary Behavioral Sciences.*

OUTREACH

Science popularization

- [Ultimate motivations and the strange things we do everyday](#) Substack · Mar 2026.
- [Engineering Fear: Protagonist Vulnerability and the Evolutionary Design of Horror](#) HBES Blog · Jan 2026.
- [L'entre deux : une réalité biologique](#) L'Entre Deux · Sep 2025.
- [L'origine de notre fascination pour les mondes imaginaires](#) La Recherche · Jun 2024.
- [Why Do Humans Enjoy Fictional Stories?](#) ProSocial World · Mar 2024.
- [Pourquoi les mondes imaginaires sont-ils de plus en plus populaires ?](#) The Conversation · Mar 2023.

Interviews & radio

- [Mondes Imaginaires, Personnalité et Effet Batman](#) CogSci, Phil & Chill · Jun 2026.
- [Les règles du jeu](#) Tangram · 2026.
- [The Psychological Foundations and the Cultural Evolution of Fiction](#) The Dissenter · 2025.
- [Histoire naturelle de la fiction](#) France Culture (CQFD) · Dec 2025.
- [Pourquoi aimons-nous la fiction ?](#) Radio Suisse RTS · Sep 2025.
- [Pourquoi est-on accros aux mondes imaginaires ?](#) France Inter · Oct 2023.
- [L'attrait pour la fiction](#) Papier Crayon · 2024.
- [Comment expliquer notre fascination pour les mondes imaginaires ?](#) ENS-PSL · Mar 2023.
- [Pourquoi sommes-nous fascinés par les fictions ?](#) TEDx Mines Nancy · Jun 2023.

Press coverage

- [Le « lore », ou la passion d'explorer des mondes imaginaires](#) Le Monde · Apr 2026.
- [Homo sapiens, the storytelling animal](#) Le Monde des Livres · Sep 2025.
- [Passionnés par Harry Potter ou Star Wars...](#) Ouest France · Jan 2024.
- [Pourquoi les mondes imaginaires sont-ils de plus en plus populaires ?](#) Sud Ouest · Oct 2023.
- [Why Are Imaginary Worlds So Appealing?](#) Inspire the Mind · May 2023.
- [Cerveau, socio et fiction](#) Sciences et Avenir · Apr 2023.
- [Homo Fictionus](#) Epsilon · Feb 2023.
- [¿Por qué son irresistibles los mundos de fantasía?](#) El País · Dec 2022.
- [Les mondes imaginaires, refuge des générations désenchantées](#) Arte (28 minutes) · Dec 2022.
- [Les mondes imaginaires et nous](#) Le 1 des libraires · Nov 2022.
- [Pourquoi nous créons des mondes imaginaires](#) Le Point · Sep 2021.