

P.U.N. Psychology Undergraduate Newsletter

ISSUE 2

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WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY IN ST. LOUIS



Special points of interest:

- *New! Supplemental Concentrations within the major*
- *New Courses for 2009*

More than a Major: *Supplemental Concentrations*

Beginning in the Fall 2009 semester, the Psychology Department will offer a new opportunity for Majors. *Supplemental Concentrations* will allow students to engage more intensively with a specific area within the discipline. The Supplemental Concentration is meant as an enrichment of the major, and the classes for a concentration may not be used to fulfill the requirements of the major, nor can they be counted toward any other major or minor. In addition, to complete the concentration, students will have to undertake an approved research assistantship (Psych 500, Independent Study), or approved internship, or practicum.

At this writing, faculty are preparing a number of supplemental concentrations, and details are not yet available. However, the concentrations will entail 9-10 units of coursework over and above the minimum major requirements, including an advanced, 400-level class, and with the addition of one semester of research in an appropriate, approved lab, or a relevant internship or practicum.

The supplemental concentration will be a valuable experience for students planning on graduate study in psychology or related fields, or for those who have a particular interest or want to gain expertise in one of the approved concentrations. Each concentration will have a mem-

ber of the faculty as contact person to meet with and advise students in the concentration.

Examples of possible concentrations include: Cognitive and Behavioral Neuroscience; Learning & Memory; Language Development and Reading; Personality & Psychopathology. As actual concentrations are developed, Psychology majors will be notified of details.

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New Courses for Fall 2009

Psych 204: Psychobiography explores the use of psychological perspectives in the in-depth study of the life of an individual, with a focus on historical, literary, and artistic figures, including Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt, William, Henry, and Alice James, Gandhi, Freud, and Frank Lloyd Wright. Dr. James Anderson will teach this course in Fall 2009.

Psych 4135: Human Behavior in Extreme Situations, taught by Dr. Robert Koff, will familiarize students with psychological theory and research that attempt to answer the question: What are the protective factors that help people who find themselves in an extreme situation respond constructively to the stress they must cope with? This will be newly offered in Fall 2009.

Psych 3195: Abnormal Child Psychology. This new course for Fall 09 will familiarize students with current perspectives on the nature, causes, assessment, treatment, and prevention of child psychopathology and related family dysfunction. It will emphasize psychiatric disorders' development and progression prior to teenage years. Dr. Bryan Loney will teach the course.

Fun and Friendly Competition: The UG Challenge

During the Fall semester the department initiated what we hope will be a regular event each semester: the Undergraduate Challenge, a web-based competition aimed at Psychology students. The quiz was offered on-line through the Psychology Undergraduate website (<http://www.artsci.wustl.edu/~psych/>), as a way to promote use of the site.

The first Challenge took the form of a 25-question quiz. Our thanks to Professors Roddy

Roediger, Desiree White, Deanna Barch, and Jeff Zacks for psychology questions. Professor Mitch Sommers contributed a stumper of a baseball question. The highest score of 24/25 was achieved by Devon O'Leary, a sophomore Psychology major and Biology minor, who won the prize of a \$50 gift card to Campus Stores.

Future Challenges may take the form of an essay contest, anagrams, or a treasure hunt. We hope to make the Challenge a

fun and interesting competition, and the prizes valuable and attractive to students. Toward this end, we welcome suggestions from students, both for contest ideas and for prizes.



New Faces in the Psychology Department



The origins of individual differences in personality and psychopathology are the research interests of Professor **Robert Krueger** (Ph.D. U. of Wisconsin, 1996). He completed his clinical internship at Brown University. His research often employs behavior genetic designs and multivariate quantitative models. Major research goals involve developing comprehensive, empirically-based models of personality and psychopathology applicable in both clinical and research settings. A related research interest involves modeling the ways in which genetic and environmental forces intertwine in the development of human individual differences.

Lori Markson has joined the Psychology faculty as Assistant Professor, having received her Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley. She studies cognitive development in

infants and young children, with a focus on conceptual and social-cognitive development. She is interested in how children learn the meanings of words, pragmatics and theory of mind, and the development of social cognition in early childhood.

At the risk of spreading old news, we feel P.U.N. should devote some space to the arrival (way last summer!) of **Sharon Corcoran** as Undergraduate Coordinator in the Psychology department. Sharon is a graduate of WUSTL, with undergraduate majors in Psychology and Linguistics. She also received an MFA degree from the Writers' Program in 1985.

Her primary duties are helping students with Major and Minor declarations, organizing special events, maintaining contact with students, updating the department's Undergraduate website, and various administrative duties involving academic issues. Hav-

ing completed five months in the position, Sharon says of it, "I really enjoy the chance to solve problems. If I can help fix an issue that's worrying a student, I get great satisfaction."

Students are welcome to drop in to Sharon's office in room 207B of the Psychology building, or call her at 935-5169.



2008-09 Honors Students

The Psychology Honors Coordinator, Dr. Mitch Sommers, reports that, beginning in Fall 2008, the first semester of Study for Honors (Psychology 498) was approved as a writing intensive course. "We are particularly excited about this development, as the writing assignments for the course are designed to provide students with an opportunity to learn to critically evaluate empirical research. Specifically, the writing assignments will give students experience with the types

of analyses that are typical in the peer-review process. We view this type of instruction as invaluable, not only to those planning on conducting graduate work in Psychology, but to anyone who will have to critically assess work in their field."

Ten students are currently doing Honors projects (see photo, right). Their themes include: happiness and political attitudes, eating disorders, happiness training, personality and emotions, the Generation Ef-

fect, preschooler depression and maternal communication, affective experience and sociopolitical attitudes, effects of exercise and personality on the aging brain, learning, and behavioral economics. Honors students are Rick Andrews, Kay Eastman, Marissa Fiorucci, Julia Goldberg, Glenn Kunkes, Mackenzie Leonard, Tommy O'Brien, Tara Singh, Jeannine Sun, and Fannie Zhou.



Student Award Winners

Keren Lehavot was awarded APA's 2008 Annual Prize for Psychological Research on Women and Gender Studies by Graduate and Undergraduate Students for her article (with Alan Lambert) entitled "Toward a greater understanding of antigay prejudice: On the role of sexual orientation and gender role violation."

Thomas O'Brien won a WU Undergraduate Research Award for his project, supervised by Professor Alan Lambert, that studied participants in Georgia's 2003 Rose Revolution. The 2003 Rose Revolution brought about a dramatic change of political power in Georgia with implications not only for Georgians but international politics around the world, especially throughout the former Soviet Union. With the help of Georgian colleagues O'Brien asked participants in an experimental group to vividly

remember their experience of the Rose Revolution. He compared measures of personal emotion and sociopolitical attitudes of those participants who wrote about the revolution vividly to participants in a control group who wrote about the mundane events of their daily life. Participants who wrote vividly on the revolution expressed higher levels of negative *and* positive emotion. Levels of personal emotion were correlated both with life satisfaction and attitudes towards Georgia and the Georgian president. Those participants expressing higher levels of life satisfaction expressed higher levels of happiness and those that expressed lower levels of life-satisfaction expressed higher levels of negative emotion. As a second mediator, higher rates of happiness correlated positively with favorable attitudes. Higher rates of anger and (feelings of) be-

trayal correlated negatively with favorable attitudes.

With the support of the Office of Undergraduate Research, **Josh Morris** spent last summer conducting an original research project on probability discounting with Dr. Leonard Green and Dr. Joel Myerson. They studied approximately 100 participants' preferences on a variety of certain and uncertain money rewards. Josh's work resulted in a poster presented at the Undergraduate Research Symposium titled, "Discounting of Probabilistic Rewards Over A Wide Range of Amounts and Probabilities".

The 2008 Hyman Meltzer Memorial Award in Psychology was awarded to **Tanya Antonini**.

Mindy Krischer received the 2008 John A. Stern Undergraduate Research Award.

2008-09 Honors class, left to right, above: Marissa Fiorucci, Tara Singh, Prof. Mitch Sommers (Coordinator), Julia Goldberg, Glenn Kunkes, Mackenzie Leonard, Richard Andrews, Kay Eastman, Tommy O'Brien, Fannie Zhou, and Jeannine Sun.

2008 UG Publications and Presentations

Sophie Cohen

Kang, S.H.K., McDermott, K.B., & **Cohen, S.M.** (2008). The mnemonic advantage of processing fitness-relevant information. *Memory & Cognition*, 36(6), 1151-1156.

Kelly Donahue

Rodebaugh, T.L., & **Donahue, K.L.** (2007). Could you be more specific, please: Self-discrepancies, affect, and variation in specificity and relevance. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 63, 1193-1207.

Josh Morris

Morris, J. (2008) Discounting of probabilistic rewards over a wide range of amounts and probabilities. Poster presented at the Undergraduate Research Symposium.

Thomas O'Brien

O'Brien, T. (2008) When the bloom comes off the rose: Priming memories of political revolutions in the former Soviet republic of Georgia. Poster presented at the Undergraduate Research Symposium.

Daniel Paull

Abrams, R.A., Davoli, C.C., Du, F., Knapp, W.J., & **Paull, D.** (2008). Altered vision near the hands. *Cognition*, 107, 1035-1047.

Jeanine Sun

Sun, J., & McDaniel, M. (2008). The Testing Effect: Experimental evidence from a college course. Poster presented at the Midstates Consortium for Math and Sciences, Chicago.

Sharda Umanath, Lynn Wilkie

Szpunar, K.K., Kang, S.H., **Umanath, S., Wilkie, L.**, McDermott, K.B., & Roediger, H.L. (2008). Testing insulates against build-up of proactive interference. Poster presented at the 49th annual meeting of the Psychonomic Society, Chicago, IL.

Visit us on the Web:

www.wustle.edu/~psych/undergrad.html

News from Recent Psychology Grads

SARA TAKSLER, a 2001 WU graduate in Psychology, has made a film with fellow alum Naomi Greenfield. TWISTED: A Balloonamatory (<http://twistedballoondoc.com>) will make its theatrical debut in St. Louis at The Tivoli May 23-29, kicking off a run in select cities across the country. They will be back in St. Louis for the film's premiere and will do Q & A's at the evening screenings May 23-25.

TWISTED: A Balloonamatory is a feature documentary, which includes an animated segment narrated by The Daily Show's Jon Stewart. The film explores

how eight people's lives are transformed when they discover balloon twisting conventions. It is a hilarious and heartwarming film about passion, salvation, love, death, race, religion, and a whole lot of balloons. They had a packed screening at the St. Louis Art Museum for the St. Louis International Film Festival and have had an equally wonderful response at 12 other film festivals.

IRINA LEVIN, a 2005 graduate with majors in Psychology and Anthropology, is in Azerbaijan on a Fulbright grant. Her research on the Meskhetian Turks, who were deported from Georgia in the 1940's, is focused on

the issues surrounding their repatriation, gender disparities in ethnic identification and self-understanding, and questions of territoriality/mobility. Her plan

for next year is to enter the University of Wisconsin-Madison's anthropology PhD program.

AARON WINKLER, a 2004 graduate in Psychology, has just released a CD: Aaron Rise. It is available on his website: <http://www.aaronrise.com/index.php?/rise/store/>

