



Northeastern University

Psych NUws: The Newsletter of the Northeastern
University Psychology Department

Department of Psychology

September 01, 2007

Psych NUws : Volume 14, Number 1

Northeastern University

Recommended Citation

Northeastern University, "Psych NUws : Volume 14, Number 1" (2007). *Psych NUws: The Newsletter of the Northeastern University Psychology Department*. Paper 7. <http://hdl.handle.net/2047/d20000201>

This work is available open access, hosted by Northeastern University.

Psych NUws

The Newsletter of the Northeastern University

Psychology Department

Vol. 14, Number 1 (Sept. 2007)

From the Editor

Northeastern has never looked better nor been such an exciting place to live and work. Everyone—faculty and staff as well as students—feels a remarkable sense of achievement and potential as we look at our beautiful campus and consider all the wonderful people who are among us at all levels. It is always important to remember that a community is made by the people in it—it isn't just given to us from above and it didn't just spring up from nowhere. We are proud of the community that exists in the Psychology Department.

Many people work to make our department a rewarding and challenging place. This starts with Ms. Malcolm, Morris, Pereira, and Buell in the Psychology Department office. Always wise, kind, and efficient, they keep us all sane and well informed. Undergraduates play key roles in Psych Club and peer counseling, and their hard work as research assistants keeps the department's research programs going. Graduate students mentor the undergrads inside and outside of classes and laboratories and they keep the faculty on their toes.

The faculty, through their research and teaching, serve and inspire students at all levels (we try, anyway!). The Graduate and Undergraduate coordinators (faculty members who take on these large departmental roles) work behind the scenes to develop policies, they help with crises of all sorts, and they help students stay on track with their requirements. And the Chair works tirelessly on behalf of all of us.

So, here is my message to undergraduates—you are part of this community. Enjoy what it offers and see what ways you can think of to make it even better!

--Prof. Hall

A Message from the Chair

Welcome to a new academic year in the Psychology Department. Great things are happening at Northeastern generally and in the Department specifically, and we look forward to an exciting and productive year.

I am the new Chair of the Department. Dr. Stephen Harkins stepped down as Chair July 1, after nine highly effective years as our leader. Dr. Harkins led the Department through some challenging times and left us well positioned to build on our strengths in teaching and research. He set an example that I, and any future

Chair, will have great difficulty matching. When he returns from his well earned sabbatical leave in the Spring, he will be teaching

Statistics (and later other courses), and continuing his internationally known research program in Social Psychology.

We have two new faculty members in the Department this fall: Dr. Marcelo Febo (SEE NEW FACULTY INTERVIEW ON NEXT PAGE) and Dr. Craig Ferris. Both work in Behavioral Neuroscience. Dr. Febo studies the effects of drugs of abuse such as cocaine on the brain and behavior. Dr. Ferris works in developmental behavioral neuroscience, looking at how exposure to various risk factors (including drugs of abuse) alter social and cognitive behaviors in animals. Dr. Ferris will be setting up and directing an Imaging Center here at Northeastern, which will allow researchers to use functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) to study brain activity in awake, behaving small animals. This exciting new Center will offer tremendous opportunities for Northeastern faculty, graduate students, and undergraduate students to learn about and use fMRI technology. We anticipate offering courses for both graduate and undergraduate students on imaging, to which both Professors Febo and Ferris will contribute. Please make them both feel welcome.

This year, as every year, the Psychology Department will offer a great variety of educational opportunities to our students. I particularly want to call your attention to Directed Studies. These are opportunities for you to work directly with a professor, generally in his or her laboratory, on research projects. Not only can you get academic credit and satisfy one of your laboratory requirements towards graduation, you can gain practical experience. In addition, you can get to know faculty members and let them know you better, which will serve you in excellent stead if you wish to seek letters of reference for a job or for graduate or professional school. If you are an upperclass student I urge you to seriously consider doing a Directed Study this year.

Last, let me remind you of the existence of the Psychology Club. Under the able direction of Dr. Dan Quinn and the student leaders, this club meets twice each month. Speakers offer advice and information on career options in Psychology, how to get into graduate school, and other topics of interest -- and a free lunch is provided! Meetings are announced in classes, on our website (where you can find much useful information -- visit www.psych.neu.edu), and posted around the Department. Give the Psychology Club a try.

I look forward to meeting you if you are a new student, and renewing the acquaintance of returning students. We are going to have a great year together.

--Prof. Eskew

New Faculty Interview: Prof. Marcelo Febo

Psych NUws conducted an interview with our newest faculty member, Dr. Marcelo Febo. We are all excited to have him in our midst. Here is what we talked about:

What was your background before coming to NU?

I was born in Puerto Rico, moved to New York City where I lived most of my childhood and adolescence and then again returned to the Island to complete my high school, college, and graduate education. My undergraduate degree is in Biology and my doctorate in Physiology, both from the University of Puerto Rico. In 2003 I moved to Worcester for a postdoctoral fellowship in neuroimaging in the Department of Psychiatry at UMass Medical School.

How did you get interested in psychology/neuroscience in the first place?

I entered college with a one-track mind on medicine. However, my first experience in a research lab at 19 years of age re-focused my goals towards a career in research and academia. But it was my first encounter with the topic of the brain, cognition, and emotion in Human Anatomy and Physiology that really drove me to neuroscience. The notion that personal emotions, thought, and social behaviors actually have an underlying physiological basis struck me as both unbelievable and fascinating at the time.

Can you briefly explain your research interests?

Right now most of my research involves the study of maternal-pup interactions. Rodent maternal behaviors are very easily measured and provide a reliable behavioral model to study the neurobiological correlates of reward-seeking, emotional and affiliative behaviors. The technical centerpiece of my research is the use of functional magnetic resonance imaging to assess maternal brain activity *in vivo* while their pups are actually suckling! It's truly remarkable to see a mother's brain light up in response to her own hungry pups. I'm currently funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse to study the effect of early life cocaine exposure on maternal behavior and brain dopamine function. We've recently observed that repeated cocaine exposure, even if it occurs only before pregnancy, could have long-term consequences on subsequent maternal behaviors and how the maternal brain responds to suckling pups.

Will you be interested in having NU undergrads as research assistants in your lab?

As I mentioned above, my undergrad experience in research, as humble as it was at that time, really shaped my own future career goals. I would definitely enjoy shaping younger minds towards wonderful careers in research. So that means yes - definitely.

Anything else you'd like to communicate to our students?

Enjoy your year, learn, have fun, and pursue your goals relentlessly. Please feel free to stop by my office at 325 NI if you are interested in the research.

Career Development the APA Way

The American Psychological Association offers many informational resources. Recently announced is their online career center called *PsycCareers* (www.psycareers.com). You can learn about the field of psychology and get many other tips whether you are an undergraduate or at a more advanced stage in your career development.

Almost New Faculty: Prof. Yury Petrov

Prof. Yury Petrov joined us last year and brings a very exciting research program to the department. *Psych NUws* asked Dr. Petrov some questions about his path to Northeastern and here are his answers:

I grew up very much under the influence of my father, who was an engineer associated with the Soviet space-program. He made sure that we (me and my twin brother) read lots of popular science magazines.

For a while we even received *Scientific American*, which was almost unheard of in Soviet Russia. I always enjoyed little chemistry or physics projects (loud explosions and rockets in particular). So when it came to choosing my major, I naturally chose physics and math.

I decided to get a PhD after I ran into one of my classmates in Moscow subway. He told me that he got a fellowship in Harvard and left to the States shortly after that. It was a hard time to start a scientific career in Russia (and this is what I wanted to do), and such an opportunity came as a revelation. A paid tuition and a decent stipend in a capitalist stronghold! Not to mention that I'd never left my homeland, and was very eager to see the world. On a deeper level, I wanted to be a scientist, because I hated to think of doing some boring everyday work, even if it paid much more. If you think that science is fun, and you can do it you should do it.

However, after getting a PhD in Physics, I decided to try something less explored. After a short search I became involved in vision science and neuroscience in general. My primary area of study is human vision. Vision is one of the most complex brain systems, and our knowledge of how this amazing mechanism works is almost nil. Until recently, there were only a few experimental techniques suitable to study human brain. Nowadays vision scientists begin to understand visual processing a little better. Currently, I am studying low-level processing, which happens immediately after signals from the eyes arrive to the brain.

I'll be inviting undergrads to work in my laboratory. Besides obvious practical benefits to me, having students is a learning experience. Often you don't really understand something until you are forced to explain it to someone.

A Question of Degree: What Kind of Program Should I Apply to for a Career as a Therapist or Counselor??

First let us make sure you understand that no one trains as a therapist (clinical psychologist, counselor, etc.) at the

undergraduate level. These careers come after post-graduate training. Your job as an undergraduate is to get a high-quality basic education in psychology as a science.

Part of such an education includes gaining some experience in research. Even if you intend to go in the clinical/counseling direction, graduate programs (ESPECIALLY Ph.D. programs) will not consider you seriously without research experience. A clinical or counseling Ph.D. is a research degree which may or may not result in your becoming trained as a therapist. Programs differ in their balance of research vs. clinical training, so be sure to keep this in mind when you investigate programs.

Of course, obtaining some clinical experience is also very important to gaining entrance to any of these programs. NU students' experience in mental health related Co-op jobs gives them a big leg up in this regard.

Here are some important facts for you to know about different degrees:

1. Masters in Social Work. This is a two-year degree that combines coursework with internships. The basic curriculum focuses on psychology, human development, group processes, psychopathology, and social welfare. Areas of specialization include mental health, families and children, medical social work, community organization, and industrial social work. Social workers are employed in a wide range of settings, including state agencies providing child welfare and family services, schools, hospitals, industry, the criminal justice system, as well as private practice working with individuals, families, or small groups.

2. Masters in Counseling Psychology or Clinical Mental Health. These are two- or three-year programs that prepare you to do therapy with individuals or groups. The difference between counseling and clinical psychology is not sharp, but generally counseling is more concerned with the problems and issues faced by normally functioning people (students, married couples, for example) whereas clinical psychology is more geared towards serious psychological problems (e.g., depression).

3. Psy.D. (Doctor of Psychology). This is a doctoral degree taking four or five years in which the emphasis is much more on practice than on research, though research is required to conduct dissertation research. Supervised field work is an important part of this degree program.

4. Ed.D. (Doctor of Education). This doctorate takes five or more years and emphasizes human development and education in the context of mental health and adjustment. This degree is offered in graduate schools of education. Practica and internships are part of this program.

5. Ph.D. in Clinical or Counseling Psychology. Students entering these programs are mainly aiming towards careers in academic settings (for example, being a university professor), though they may also be employed full-time in research settings (government or hospitals) and they may do clinical practice if they choose (if they obtain the requisite certification).

6. M.D. in Psychiatry. Another way to be a mental health professional is to earn an M.D. degree in a medical school, and then to train in a Psychiatry residency program. Altogether, becoming a psychiatrist takes approximately seven years after college. Psychiatrists may choose to be researchers (if they acquire the relevant skills), teachers (e.g., in a medical school), or clinicians (i.e., seeing patients with mental health problems), or a combination of these. A psychiatrist receives more training in the use of therapeutic drugs while a counseling or clinical

psychologist receives more training in the theory of human behavior.

--Prof. Hall

Our Grad Is Now a Professor of Criminal Justice at NU! Natasha Frost, '97

Just over 10 years ago, in June of 1997, I graduated from Northeastern with my Bachelor's degree in Psychology. In my senior year, as graduation approached all too rapidly, I remained torn about my future plans. I had always assumed that I would go to law school and would one day become a criminal defense attorney. A brief stint as a research assistant in Professor Judith Hall's research lab during the first part of my senior year triggered an existential crisis (thanks Judy!). Suddenly it seemed social science research might be my calling. Long consultations over lunches with Professor Hall made me realize that I should probably take a year to figure out my life and my goals. I like to think the decision to take a year off was fortuitous for Professor Hall as well because it meant I would continue working in her lab part-time post-graduation! During that year, it became clear to me that research was what I wanted to dedicate my life and work to - and that a doctoral program was the route I needed to pursue. I still harbored a love for criminal law and criminal justice and so decided that I would seek a doctorate in criminal justice.

I moved to New York in the summer of 1998 and began work on my doctorate. Six years later I graduated with two Masters degrees and a Ph.D. in criminal justice from the City University of New York. In my first year, I was a good little psychology graduate and signed up for a host of classes that were more psychological in orientation (Psychopathology... the Psychology of Crime... Psych and the Law... and so forth). Then I met my mentor, Dr. Todd Clear, who specialized in corrections. Through several courses over the next few years, I became keenly interested in punitiveness (at both the individual and social levels). I ended up concentrating in Punishment and Social Control, writing a dissertation on state variations in punitiveness in imprisonment, and graduating having long ago forgotten most of what I knew about psychology.

I always said that I hoped to some day return to Northeastern as a professor of criminal justice (some of your professors in the psychology department can attest to that). The opportunity of my lifetime arose when NU's College of Criminal Justice advertised an Assistant Professor opening for the Fall of 2005 and they were looking for someone with a specialization in corrections to boot. To cut a long story short, I was offered the position and moved back to Massachusetts and into my office on the 4th floor of Churchill (I have to remind myself that I actually don't live there). I now teach two classes per semester and have taught a variety of offerings including Corrections, Community Corrections, Intro to Criminal Justice, Victims of Crime, and Gender, Crime and Justice. My research interests still focus on punishment (including the psychological effects of isolation and deprivation). I am currently working on a research project with the Women's Prison Association and hire both undergraduate and graduate research assistants for that project. I am also involved in a project exploring the effects of incarceration on communities (might incarceration actually cause crime rather than prevent it?).

I would welcome the opportunity to teach or work with psychology students and invite you to come by my office and meet with me if you have any interest in psychology and crime or criminal justice.

Natasha A. Frost, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
College of Criminal Justice, 415 CH
Northeastern University
Boston, MA 02115
Phone: 617.373.4076
Email: n.frost@neu.edu



OPPORTUNITIES

The Speech Perception Lab needs you if American English is your native language, you have no speech or hearing disorders, and you are between 18 and 45 years of age. We pay \$10/hr for one or two hour experiments, scheduled at your convenience. Call 373-4462 for details.

There are Directed Study opportunities in Prof. Hall's lab! Please contact Prof. Hall at j.hall@neu.edu. Or look for flyers posted around the Department.

(But you can also take the initiative to ask professors if they need a Directed Study student—most of these positions are not advertised.)



Psych NUws is produced by members of the
Northeastern University Psychology Department. All
contributions are welcome!

Editor: Dr. Judith Hall, x 3790, 225 NI
Dept. of Psychology
Northeastern University
Boston, MA 02115
j.hall@neu.edu

