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Psych NUws: The Newsletter of the Northeastern
University Psychology Department

Department of Psychology

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Psych NUws

The Newsletter of the Northeastern University Psychology Department

Vol. 17, Number 1 (September 2010)

Welcome from the Chair

Welcome to a new academic year in the Psychology Department! Last year was exciting and productive, and we expect the coming year to be *even better*.

Please join me in a special welcome to our newest faculty member, **Lisa Feldman Barrett**, who joins us this fall as Distinguished Professor of Psychology and Director of the Interdisciplinary Affective Science Laboratory, with additional appointments at Harvard Medical School and Massachusetts General Hospital. Prof. Barrett is an internationally renowned scientist who studies the nature of emotion from both psychological and neuroscience perspectives. She will not only be teaching undergraduate and graduate courses, but will also provide numerous opportunities for undergraduates to gain hands-on experience conducting research in her lab. We are delighted to welcome Prof. Barrett and her entire research team to our department. (Please see the “**New Faculty Interview**” in this issue.)

We have a large array of activities and opportunities for undergraduates in the coming year, and we urge you to take full advantage of them. I encourage you to visit our newly

designed website (www.psych.neu.edu) throughout the semester for up-to-date information on the various programs and resources we have to offer.

A few highlights:

Psychology Club. The Psych Club meets numerous times during the year and provides the opportunity for you to meet with other students who share interests similar to yours, and to take an active role in influencing your academic life as an undergraduate. At club meetings, speakers offer advice and information on co-op opportunities, career options, graduate school, and psychology-related programs. The club also provides a forum for discussing how to navigate departmental and university requirements. And it organizes special activities, such as a trip to the annual meeting of the Eastern Psychological Association. Prof. John Coley (j.coley@neu.edu), the Psych Club advisor, works closely with Psych Club members and student leaders as they plan club activities. Membership is free – and a free lunch is served at all the meetings. I encourage you to take advantage of this opportunity to become engaged in the life of the department.

Directed Study. The faculty of the Psychology Department are strongly committed to both research and teaching, and they provide opportunities for undergraduates to become fully engaged in research projects in their laboratories. One mechanism is the directed study, where a student registers for course credit to work with a professor in his/her lab, usually on ongoing research. You can count the directed study toward one of your lab requirements, and you gain valuable hands-on research experience, often working as part of a lab team. This is a great way to get to know your professors.

Combined Majors. The department not only offers a major (and minor) in psychology, but also a number of “combined majors” that, as the name implies, combine the study of psychology with that of another discipline in an integrated manner. We currently offer five such combined majors: psychology/linguistics, psychology/education, psychology/American Sign Language-Deaf Studies, cognitive psychology/computer science, and cognitive psychology/information science. More information about these combined majors (formerly called dual majors) can be found on our website.

Psi Chi. Psi Chi is the national psychology honor society. It aims to encourage, stimulate and maintain excellence in scholarship, and to advance the science of psychology. Membership is open to undergraduates who are making the study of psychology one of their major interests and who meet the minimum qualifications. Students become members of the national honor society by joining our local chapter. For more information, visit our website or stop by the Psychology Department main office (125 NI) for an application form.

Advising. The department is committed to providing our students with a strong academic advising program. Faculty advisors are available to meet with students to discuss requirements, course selection, career options, special programs (such as combined majors), and the like. Faculty advisors, with their special areas of advising expertise, are listed on our website. Visit the main department office (125 NI) to make an appointment to see an advisor. For questions about our advising program, contact our Head Advisor, Prof. Dan Quinn (d.quinn@neu.edu).

We are committed to providing our students with the courses, resources, and opportunities they need to pursue a productive, challenging, and rewarding undergraduate experience. We very much encourage you to play an active role in the department, to get to know the faculty, and to make your voices heard. We hope you will avail yourselves of the many opportunities we provide, and we ask that you let us know how we can make your undergraduate experience even more rewarding. I am eager to work with you as we move forward and welcome your input, ideas, and suggestions – my email address is j.miller@neu.edu. And don't forget to visit our website for information on additional resources and activities, announcements, updates, faculty profiles....and much more.

I wish you a very productive and rewarding semester.

-- Prof. Miller



New Faculty Interview: Prof. Lisa Feldman Barrett

Prof. Barrett has just joined us from Boston College. She has a vibrant research program in affective science. *Psych NUws* recently asked Prof. Barrett about her background and interests.

Psych NUws: What's your main research focus?

Prof. Barrett: The nature and dynamics of affective and emotional processing—including the structure of affect, the neurobiology of the affect system and how it changes with age, individual variation in affective learning, and individual differences in affective response. My interests include: Affect as source of attention in vision, the conceptual system for emotion (including how emotion knowledge is represented and structured in the mind and the brain), how language and conceptual knowledge about emotion shape the experience and perception of emotion, and sex differences in emotion.

Psych NUws: What courses do you like to teach?

Prof. Barrett: Courses on Emotion, Philosophy of Science, History of Psychology. I am interested to try my hand at Intro Psych.

Psych NUws: Can undergrads get involved in your research?

Prof. Barrett: Undergraduate students are an important element in the day to day functioning of our laboratory. They can become involved in almost every aspect of the scientific process, including publishing scientific papers and presenting research at national conferences.

Psych NUws: How did you discover psychology and your research direction?

Prof. Barrett: I dropped out of physics in my first year of my undergraduate education and had to pick up another course. I stumbled into an intro psychology course and it was love at first sight. I majored in psychology and decided to pursue my PhD in the field.

As a graduate student training in clinical psychology, I noticed something interesting when dealing with clients: Some people used the words “anger,” “sadness,” and “fear” interchangeably, as if they could not tell these emotional states apart. This observation was the basis for a decade-long research project where I examined the structure of emotional experience on a person-by-person basis. Each of over 700 participants tracked their experiences for about a month during the course of everyday life using a then novel procedure called computerized experience-sampling. I made a startling discovery: Although everyone largely assumes that “anger,” “sadness,” and “fear” are discrete, distinguishable events, people vary a great deal in the extent to which they represent their experiences in distinctive categorical terms. Some individuals use these words to refer to distinct experiences, whereas others use exactly the same words to represent what they have in common, which is unpleasant feeling. The theoretical implications of this discovery led me to my current research focus, which you can learn about on my website: www.affective-science.org

Psych NUws: What made you decide to come to NU?

Prof. Barrett: NU is on its way to becoming one of the great research universities in the US. I wanted to be part of that effort.



Direct-Entry Nursing: A Great Path to a Nursing Career

Direct-Entry means you complete your bachelor's degree in the major of your choice and then you enter a nursing program for an RN or even for an RN plus Master's degree. It means you have a solid undergraduate education and the nursing curriculum is designed with that in mind. Hilary Ziegner ('06) is currently in NU's program and writes this description for you:

One way to continue your journey through a career in psychology is to become a Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner (NP) or Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS). Nursing at a Master's level can be an excellent way to progress in the healthcare field that you love (be it psychology or other) as an advanced practitioner or clinician. NP's and CNS's practice in many settings, including hospitals, community health, research, schools, and private practice. Northeastern has a wonderful (and nationally recognized) Direct-Entry Master's Nursing program.

The program works as follows. Applicants are Bachelor's prepared (from any field). The program requires a few additional pre-requisites (e.g., Anatomy and Physiology) to be completed before entering classes. The first four consecutive semesters prepare the student to sit for the national licensure exam (NCLEX) to become an RN. Following licensure, students find a job as an RN and work for at least 9 months in order to gain RN experience (as is the NU experiential way). It is not technically a Co-op (it's a real job) but NU does keep your loans in deferment. Following the experiential phase, students return to school on either a full or part-time basis in order to complete the graduate-level courses and practicums in the selected specialty. This process takes approx. 2 years if completed full-time. Therefore, the entire process takes approx. 4 years, including a valuable experiential phase. The end result is

that you will be a licensed advanced practitioner who can offer holistic, patient-centered care.

To explore the program further, visit <http://www.northeastern.edu/bouve/programs/cdirectentry.html>. If you would like to learn more from a student's perspective, feel free to contact me (Hilary Ziegner) at ziegner.h@husky.neu.edu.



News of Our Grads!

We are ALWAYS proud and delighted to print reports from recent graduates of our undergraduate Psychology program. Read about their successes and also about false starts, and about how they view their NU experience and what advice they can give to you!

Elizabeth Salib, '05 Social Psychology

Almost 5 years ago I graduated from the Psychology Department at NU. Currently, I am a second year graduate student in the Social Psychology PhD program at Rutgers University. Based on my experiences at NU, I offer some advice for those who want to pursue a doctorate as well as some general good practices for all.

Don't: Decide on one area of psychology early on to focus all of your efforts. When I started at NU, like many psychology majors, I had a strong interest in clinical psychology. I immediately took several courses in abnormal psychology, fully committed to the pursuit of a Clinical Psychology PhD. It wasn't until I tried clinical work, through Co-ops, that I realized clinical was not for me.

Do: Take a wide variety of courses and Co-ops. Take courses in as many areas of psychology as possible. By doing so, you may discover you are passionate about an area you never expected. If you plan on pursuing a PhD, this may be your

last chance to do so (since you will be focusing on your topic area). Take courses – or double major/ minor – in different departments, especially majors complementary to psychology (e.g., Business, Computer Programming, Statistics, Law, Health related fields). I was a double major in Psychology and Philosophy with a minor in Religious Studies. My current research involves understanding moral reasoning and its connection to discrimination. My external coursework complements my psychology background.

Also try many different types of Co-ops. My first was with Vinfen where I helped run the day program in a residential home for individuals with schizophrenia. After this experience, I was pretty certain I was not interested in clinical psychology. At my second Co-op, I worked at Mass General Hospital in their schizophrenia research lab. Until this Co-op I had been treating research as more of a chore, but research was the aspect I truly enjoyed!

Don't: Think that taking classes is enough. Get involved! In almost any psychology related field, research experience is smiled upon. I spent the bulk of my undergraduate career as a research assistant in Professor Hall's lab. I worked on various studies in her lab then conducted an honors thesis. Not only did I learn how to conduct research, but it solidified that it was something I really enjoyed.

Do: Take time off after you graduate!! Five years of education at Northeastern is a long time. Five years for a doctorate is also a long time. Doing an undergraduate and doctoral degree back to back takes huge amounts of energy and enthusiasm. After graduating from NU, I worked for four years in various clinical research settings. Not only did I gain some really valuable skills working in medical research (organizing multiple studies at once, working with the IRB,

etc.), but I also gave myself a much needed break from studying.

Don't: Be intimidated to apply to graduate school. Applying to graduate school is difficult and time consuming, but it does not have to be intimidating. Start your essays early. Ask friends, family, and professors to give you perspective and help edit your essays. Try your best but if you don't get in the first time, you can always try again!

Jaclyn Cadrin, '09 *Applied Behavior Analysis*

I started my first Co-op search like most other students, not really knowing exactly what I was looking for. I had experience working with adults with disabilities, but I wanted to work with children, so I applied to several schools for children with special needs not really knowing what to expect. I went on my first interview at the Protestant Guild Learning Center and absolutely loved it. It was a small residential school with a variety of different students—and they had a rock wall! When I was offered a job I accepted on the spot, and now three years later I am still a full time employee.

Before entering my first Co-op, I wasn't quite sure where I wanted to go with my degree in psychology, but after working with the students using Applied Behavior Analysis, I knew I wanted to pursue a career in that direction. I was able to take some ABA classes at Northeastern, and returned to the Learning Center for my remaining two Co-ops where they were able to create a Co-op position within their behavior department for me to further refine my skills. I will be starting my master's in ABA at Simmons in the fall, due in large part to my Co-op experiences.

My advice to first time Co-op students is to keep your options open, and not to be discouraged if

you don't hear back from employers right away. While I was lucky enough to find a job that I loved on my first Co-op, not everyone has the same experience. If you don't find a job that is perfect your first time around, that's OK. Discovering what you don't want to do for the rest of your life can be just as important as finding what you do want to do.

Sigrid Scherpiet, '08 *Brain Science*

I am doing the Masters program of "Neural & Behavioral Sciences" at the Graduate Training Center of Neuroscience – International Max Planck Research School in Tuebingen, Germany. I passed all my exams successfully! Honestly, I am very proud, in particular, since all course material was very new to me. I am also done with my first laboratory rotation, which I did at the center for clinical brain research. My project was mainly on spatial neglect where I worked with a fMRI data set. Three weeks ago, the second semester started already and it again won't be easy either, but now I know it will be manageable.

Halle Thurnauer '08 *Schizophrenia Research*

I am currently working in a Schizophrenia Research Clinic at the Yale School of Medicine running clinical trials and various other cognition studies with participants who are diagnosed with schizophrenia. My research methods skills have been slammed into overdrive! I am really enjoying working here despite the stress of working with such a sick population and balancing the needs of pharmaceutical sponsors, Yale human subjects policies, and of course, the array of personalities in the Department of Psychiatry. I think that this is the perfect stepping stone before applying to Clinical PhD program. I am still trying to figure out exactly what kind of Clinical program I am interested in – I am waiting for it to come to me in a dream....

Jeannette Gordon Reinoso, '99 *Counseling Psychology*

I now have my PhD in Counseling Psychology and recently completed a part-time contract (to provide psychotherapy to students) with the University of Texas at Dallas's student counseling center. I passed my Texas jurisprudence exam last month. Earlier this year, I obtained a part-time job to start in August to attain my needed post-doctoral hours for licensure. I'll work about 25 hrs/wk for 2 years as a bilingual family therapist in a community setting which provides family therapy. It will be great to round myself out, receiving formal training as well as experience in marriage and family therapy as well as work with four other bilingual (Spanish-English) therapists--usually I've been the only one and now I can actually consult, get feedback, observe, be observed, etc. Assuming I pass my written and oral exams, and complete those hours, come August 2012, I will finally be a licensed psychologist. It's sure been a long path, but not one I'd change in any way--were I single, I'd already be all done, but having a family, I'm glad I've taken the time to spread things out, enjoy each other, and stress less.



Read Here About Psychology Graduate Programs!

There are hundreds of master's and PhD programs in psychology. Sometimes in *Psych NUws*, we highlight a few:

(1) **The University College London** is starting a new MSc program on Social Cognition (MSc in Social Cognition: Research and Applications). This 1-year program draws on cutting edge expertise on core domains of social

cognition, attitudes, judgment and decision making and on social neuroscience. With four core modules, and two specialist options, the program is tailored so that students can specialize in one of three strands of social cognition: mainstream social cognition, judgment and decision making, or social neuroscience. The department has advanced technology for the study of socio-cognitive processes, including fMRI, eye-, speech- and motion-tracking equipment for dyadic and group settings, as well as a 360-degree video camera.

Students will profit from UCL's and London's vibrant research environment, with regular scientific meetings that attract leading international experts. In addition, as one of the world's foremost commercial and political centers, London provides excellent opportunities for high-level applied research.

A link to the program can be found at:
<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/lifesciences-faculty/degree-programmes/social-cognition>

Questions can be directed to: René Kopietz
(r.kopietz@ucl.ac.uk)

(2) The Department of Psychology at **Westfield State College** offers three separate Master of Arts degree opportunities.

--**School Guidance Counseling**. The course of study for the School Guidance Counseling concentration offers students the opportunity to apply for Massachusetts certification as Guidance Counselors with a focus on either PreK-8 or 5-12.

--**Mental Health Counseling**. Completion of the Mental Health Counseling track is the first step toward fulfillment of a Massachusetts mental health counselor license.

--**Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)**. Upon completion of the program, graduates will be qualified to take the Board Certified Behavior Analyst examination administered by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB). This program can be completed in as little as two years.

Complete details available at
<http://www.wsc.ma.edu/dept/psychology/#>.

(3) **Idaho State University** has an Experimental Psychology Master of Science program. Students take courses across the core areas of experimental psychology, and therefore achieve a high level of understanding of experimental psychology and research methods that will prepare them for a PhD program or for work in industry. If you are looking for a strong master's program to apply to, check out Idaho State.

For additional information about the graduate program and faculty, see our website at <http://www.isu.edu/departments/psych/index.shtml>.

(4) There is a new MS Program in psychology at **Arizona State University**, located in the New College of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences. The goal is to provide students strong methodological training and background in several core content areas of psychology (including social). The program is well suited to those headed on to a doctoral program, as well as to students interested in research careers.

To learn more, check out
<http://newcollege.asu.edu/programs/msp/> as well as
<http://newcollege.asu.edu/programs/msp/faculty.shtml>

(5) **The Warrington College of Business Administration at the University of Florida** seeks applications for its doctoral program in Marketing. Students interested in research in judgment and decision making or in social or cognitive psychology relevant to consumer behavior are encouraged to apply. Many of the Marketing Department faculty are trained in social and cognitive psychology, and their research interests include various topics in judgment and decision making, social cognition, goal pursuit, unconscious processing, and emotion. The University of Florida Marketing Department is consistently ranked among the top in the field, with a longstanding reputation for excellence and productivity in consumer behavior research. For more information about faculty and their research interests, and details on applying to the doctoral program, please see <http://warrington.ufl.edu/mkt/>. For additional information about the program, please contact Lyle Brenner, Graduate Coordinator, at lyle.brenner@warrington.ufl.edu.

(6) There is a new Social Psychology PhD program at the **University of Alabama**. At the University of Alabama, the Social Psychology area provides training in both basic and applied research. For more information, see: <http://psychology.ua.edu/academics/graduate/experimental/social/home.html>



Read About This Co-op Experience!

Katie Beauregard, '12

I recently completed a Co-op in Dr. Anne Fulton's laboratory in the Department of Ophthalmology at Children's Hospital Boston, just down the road. When I first applied to this

Co-op, I remember seeing the job description on NEUCool and reading about retinopathy of prematurity (ROP). I had never heard of this disease before, but I have always been interested in pediatrics, so I looked up ROP online. I found that it was a disease found in the retina of premature babies that can result in loss of vision.

On my first day working at Children's, my principal investigator, Jim Akula, PhD (from the NU Psychology Department!), sat down with the other Co-op and me to explain the basic concepts behind ROP. He broke down the pathogenesis of the disease, described the clinical cues that diagnose the level of ROP, and the current treatments. Unfortunately, he mentioned that the best currently available medical management for ROP, *vaso-obliteration*, left patients with lifelong visual dysfunction. He continued, stating that we would use the rat as a model of ROP, so that we could test hypotheses and evaluate novel therapeutic interventions.

Before my six months working here I couldn't have imagined all of the unique skills I would learn, from "Winkling," a technique to take out the retina for the study of gene or protean expression, to electroretinography (ERG), the only quantitative, noninvasive way to study cellular activity in the retina *in vivo*, to immunolabeling, flatmounting and imaging retina of a rat with induced ROP so that disease severity could be objectively evaluated. But beyond technique, I gained an invaluable perspective on science, especially that *nothing* is easy the first time. Mistakes were accepted as a necessity in the advancement of knowledge. Due to this realm of thought, I was able to work outside of my comfort zone, learning the theories behind the protocols. Science, it turns out, is really more about asking the next question than answering the last one.



SINS AGAINST SCIENCE: Scientific Misconduct Really Happens, Even in Psychology

In 2001, a promising young social psychologist on the faculty of the Harvard Psychology Department, Karen Ruggiero, publicly retracted several articles published in prominent journals, admitting to falsification of the data. She lost her job and her career. Now, a prominent senior professor in the same department, Marc Hauser, has made similar retractions of his articles. Though the details have not been made public, there is a suspicion of data fabrication.

This, of course, is not a problem unique to Harvard and indeed it may not happen there any more often than elsewhere, we don't know. But it shows that researchers in fine institutions can let down the highest values of the scientific profession.

Some psychologists make it their own research project to track instances of misconduct in psychology and to catalogue their nature and extremity. There is definitely a continuum between blatant fabrication and other questionable practices, according to ethics researchers. It is obviously wrong to remove data points that contradict one's hypothesis, not report all of one's results, not disclose conflicts of interest, and use others' ideas without giving proper credit. But sometimes there is a gray area around these decisions, meaning that the researcher him/herself may not be alert to the problem or may reconstrue bad practices as acceptable. Sometimes what's right and wrong is truly ambiguous and may require fresh perspectives from colleagues. Sometimes there may be external constraints that make a researcher feel his/her choices are limited (e.g., extreme page limits on a published article, or looming deadlines). It is easy to fall into ethical laziness in these circumstances. However,

researchers must never relax their self-scrutiny about ethical practice.

Those of us in the research business grapple with ethical issues—all the time. Typically the questions are about small decisions but even small issues are important, not only in their own right but because a habit or a culture of shortcutting and skirting the truth can become ingrained and can accumulate and magnify. It is especially distressing if ethical slackness is the consequence of extreme competition for grants, jobs, and recognition—with people feeling they must cut corners in order to be competitive. Such a tragedy may have happened at Harvard.

--Adapted from APA Monitor on

Psychology, July/August 2010.

Undergrads: Like to Write?

We at *Psych NUws* always welcome the participation of undergrads! Here are some ideas for ways to make your own—and other students' voices—heard in the Department. But these are just suggestions! There is no limit to the creative and useful contributions you could make.

- Summarize a research article that you think would have general interest.
- Do an informal survey of student opinion on a topic relevant to the Department and tell us your results.
- Write up your own opinions and start a dialogue on some topic, student to student or student to faculty.
- Make suggestions for improvements to the Department
- Send us write-ups of Psych Club activities that have taken place, or are coming up.
- Start a "complaints" column.
- Write up some humor relevant to psychology, or send in psychology-related cartoons.
- Suggest to the *Psych NUws* Editor (Prof. Hall) what undergrads would like to see in *Psych*

NUws.

- Offer advice to incoming students.
- Make announcements of student-relevant activities and opportunities.

As you see, the sky is the limit! Just email Prof. Hall (j.hall@neu.edu).



OPPORTUNITIES!!

The Interdisciplinary Affective Science Laboratory, directed by Dr. Lisa Feldman Barrett, has a number of research positions open for undergraduate research assistants. We are looking for committed, motivated, capable students to work as research assistants starting in September, 2010 (and future semesters). Our laboratory uses a multi-method approach (including social cognitive methods, psychophysiology and functional neuroimaging) to investigate questions related to the nature of affect and emotion. A select number of Research Assistants will have the chance to engage in a variety of exciting opportunities such as working at Mass General Hospital, educating visitors at the Museum of Science, attending conferences, training to run psychophysiology studies, and more. Research assistants will enroll for directed study and lab credits and will work approximately 10 hours in the lab weekly. Positions are for a minimum of two semesters. If you are interested, please see Janine Vlassakis in Prof. Barrett's lab.



Psych NUws is a joint effort of the faculty, graduate and undergraduate students, and staff of the Northeastern University Psychology Department. Direct your inquiries and contributions to the Editor, Prof. Judith Hall (j.hall@neu.edu).

