CONGRATULATIONS JAY!

Jay McClelland has been awarded the Walter Van Dyke Bingham Professorship in Psychology and Cognitive Neuroscience.

Please join us in congratulating Jay!

MIND-BODY CENTER LECTURE

The Pittsburgh Mind-Body Center Lecture Series

Coping and Stress Reactivity:
A Dual Process Model of Responses to Stress
Bruce E. Compas, Ph.D.
Patricia and Rodes Hart Professor of Psychology
Vanderbilt University

Thursday, November 21, 2002
4:00 - 5:00 pm
Biomedical Science Tower, Room S121
1st Floor
Darragh Street

Bruce E. Compas is the Patricia and Rodes Hart Professor of Psychology at Vanderbilt University and Director of Psycho-Oncology at the Vanderbilt-Ingram Cancer Center. Professor Compas studies processes of self-regulation, reactivity, and coping with stress that can guide interventions to enhance more effective adaptation to stress and adversity. Current research includes studies with children, adolescents, and adults and involves interactions among psychological, biological, and social processes as they relate to self-regulation and coping. Current projects include studies of children and their parents coping with pediatric recurrent abdominal pain, mothers and daughters coping with breast cancer risk, a cognitive-behavioral intervention for women with newly diagnosed breast cancer, and a cognitive-behavioral preventive intervention for families of depressed parents. Professor Compas received his Ph.D. in clinical psychology from the UCLA in 1980 and was a member of the faculty at the University of Vermont until this year.

In his presentation, Professor Compas will focus on the development of a dual-process model of responses to stress emphasizing the role of both controlled and automatic processes in adaptation to stress. Data will be presented from ongoing studies of cancer patients, families at risk for cancer, recurrent pain patients, and depressed parents and their children.

NOVEMBER CALENDAR NOTES

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 26th:
Monthly payday

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 27th:
Student Thanksgiving break begins – NO CLASSES. Psychology administrative offices will close at 2pm.

THURSDAY & FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 28th & 29th:
Official university holidays. All University Offices will be closed.
Congratulations to Erin Ingvalson, whose first paper came to press last month.

Michael J. Wegner & Erin M. Ingvalson
A decisional component of holistic encoding.

The department is home to all kinds of hidden talents...
Theresa Treasure’s photography is featured here.

If you’d like to share your talent, please submit materials to Rochelle Croom.
So this year, you agreed to host the big family Thanksgiving dinner. Congratulations! You moron! No, seriously, hosting Thanksgiving dinner does NOT have to be traumatic. The key is planning. For example, every year my family spends Thanksgiving at the home of a friend named Arlene Reidy, who prepares dinner for a huge number of people. I can't give an exact figure, because my eyeballs become fogged with gravy. But I'm pretty sure that Arlene is feeding several branches of the armed forces.

And Arlene is not slapping just any old food on the table, either. She's a gourmet cook who can make anything. I bet she has a recipe for cold fusion. She serves moist, tender turkeys the size of Arnold Schwarzenegger, accompanied by a vast array of exotic hors d'oeuvres and 350 kinds of sweet potatoes made from scratch. I'm pretty sure Arlene threshes her own wheat.

If you were to look into Arlene's dining room at the end of Thanksgiving dinner, it would at first appear to be empty. Then you'd hear groans and burps coming from under the table, and you'd realize that the guests, no longer able to cope with the food and gravity at the same time, were lying on the floor. Every now and then you'd see a hand snake up over the edge of the table, grab a handful of stuffing, then dart back under the table again, after which you'd hear chewing, then swallowing, then the sound of digestive organs rupturing. Some guests have to be rushed by ambulance to the hospital, receiving pumpkin pie intravenously en route.

The question is: How is Arlene able to prepare such an amazing feast for so many people? The answer is simple: I have no idea. I'm always watching football when it happens. But my point is that, if you want to provide your Thanksgiving guests with a delicious home-cooked meal, one approach would be to go to Arlene's house and steal some of her food when she's busy churning the butter. She'd never notice. She has enough leftovers to make turkey sandwiches for everybody in Belgium.

If you prefer to do your own cooking this Thanksgiving, your first step is to calculate how much turkey you need. Home economists tell us that the average 155-pound person consumes 1.5 pounds of turkey, so if you're planning to have 14 relatives for dinner, you'd simply multiply 14 times 1.5 times 155, which means your turkey should weigh, let's see, carry the two . . . 3,255 pounds. If you can't find a turkey that size, you should call up selected relatives and explain to them, in a sensitive and diplomatic manner, that they can't come because they weigh too much.

In selecting a turkey, remember that the fresher it is, the better it will taste. That's why, if you go into the kitchen of top professional homemaker Martha Stewart on Thanksgiving morning, you'll find her whacking a live turkey with a hatchet. In fact, you'll find Martha doing this every morning.

"It just relaxes me," she reports.

Your other option is to get a frozen turkey at the supermarket. The Turkey Manufacturers Association recommends that, before you purchase a frozen bird, you check it for firmness by test-dropping it on the supermarket floor -- it should bounce three vertical inches per pound -- and then take a core sample of the breast by drilling into it with a 3/8-inch masonry bit until you strike the giblets. If supermarket employees attempt to question you, the Turkey Manufacturers Association recommends that you "gesture at them with the drill in a reassuring manner."

When you get the turkey home, you should thaw it completely by letting it sit on a standard kitchen counter at room temperature for one half of the turkey's weight in hours, or roughly 19 weeks. "If you see spiders nesting in your turkey," states the Turkey Manufacturers Association, "you waited too long."

Once the turkey is defrosted, you simply cook it in a standard household oven at 138.4 degrees centimeter for 27 minutes per pound (29 minutes for married taxpayers filing jointly). Add four minutes for each 100 feet of your home's elevation above sea level, which you should determine using a standard household sextant. Inspect the turkey regularly as it cooks; when you notice that the skin has started to blister, the time has come for you to give your guests the message they've been eagerly awaiting: "Run!" Because you left the plastic wrapper on the turkey, and it's about to explode, spewing out flaming salmonella units at the speed of sound.

As you stand outside waiting for the fire trucks, you should take a moment to count your blessings. The main one, of course, is that you will definitely not be asked to host the big family Thanksgiving dinner next year. But it's also important to remember -- as our Pilgrim foreparents remembered on the very first Thanksgiving -- that two excellent names for rock bands would be "The Turkey Spiders" and "The Flaming Salmonella Units."
Jenny Saffran, University of Wisconsin-Madison will be giving the following colloquium series talks

Monday, December 9, 2002, 4:30-5:50pm, BH A51
Statistical Language Learning: Mechanisms and Constraints

In this talk I will present results from a number of experiments suggesting that language learners, particularly infants, possess the ability to detect and use statistical properties of linguistic input in the service of language mechanisms: what statistics can human learners compute, what is the nature of domain-specific? The second part of the talk will point to constraints on statistical learning that assist learners in finding pertinent structure in the input. Implications for theories of language acquisition will be discussed.

Tuesday, December 10, 2002, 12:30-1:30pm, BH 340A
Statistical Learning: Domain General and Domain Specific

A central controversy in the study of development is the extent to which learning mechanisms are domain-general -- that is, usable for the acquisition of diverse types of information -- or domain-specific -- tailored for the acquisition of a specific type of knowledge. I will present evidence suggesting that statistical learning may be both domain-general and domain-specific. The mechanism itself appears to be domain-general, performing computations over primitives drawn from disparate domains. However, the output of the learning mechanism is integrated with previously acquired knowledge in the target domain, suggesting that the output of learning may be domain-specific. I will discuss implications of these results for theories of learning.
Dear Editor,

I hate to complain, but I do want to address your editorial standards and quality control. It's in regard to an article in Volume 1 No. 10 on page 2 where the editor seriously misquoted me in the third line. I never said "@#$%!!!!!! nativism" but rather "@**$@%&$#^!! nativism." I would expect greater accuracy in quotation from an academic journal of the quality of the PL Bulletin.

--Ken Kotovsky

Library Workshops
Thursdays 4-5 pm

November 14: Copyright
Computer Science Librarian Missy Harvey will explain the basics of copyright and answer your questions.

November 21: Citation Database Searching
This workshop will demonstrate how to use the Web of Science database to perform citation searching.

December 5: Patents
An introduction to the power of patent searching and the U.S. Patent and Trademark website.
Towards Understanding the Role of the Frontal Lobes in Executive Control

To this day, the frontal lobes remain a region of human cortex for which its function continues to elude neuroscientists. Evidence from neuropsychological, electrophysiological and functional neuroimaging supports the notion that the prefrontal cortex (PFC) is necessary for temporarily maintaining relevant information in an active state, a process that is critical for the voluntary control of behavior. The extensive reciprocal connections from PFC to virtually all cortical and subcortical structures places it in a unique anatomical position to monitor and manipulate diverse cognitive processes. However, little is known about the differential contribution of PFC versus other cortical/subcortical areas in implementing executive control. In this talk, I will present evidence from several event-related fMRI studies that support a model of executive control in which PFC biases activity in posterior stimulus-specific association cortex in favor of behaviorally relevant information. Moreover, the temporal dynamics of the signal from the PFC vs. posterior stimulus-specific association cortex is consistent with perceptually-driven bottom-up flow of information when encoding representations that must be maintained, and internally-driven top-down flow of information when decisions and actions are made based on maintained representations. Hopefully, an improved understanding of the physiological basis of executive control derived from powerful techniques such as fMRI and ERP will lead to a narrower and more useful view of frontal lobe function.

Monday, November 25, 2002
2:00 pm
Glaser Auditorium, LRDC

Reception following Colloquium

Making Working Memory Work: Computational Models of Learning in the Frontal Cortex and Basal Ganglia

The frontal cortex has long been thought to subserve both working memory (the holding of information online for processing) and "executive" function (deciding how to manipulate working memory and perform processing). A number of computational models of working memory, inspired by the biology of the frontal cortex, have been developed, but the mechanistic basis of executive function remains elusive. This is likely because it is essentially a homunculus whose magical and unexplained powers make the frontal cortex smart. In this talk, I will present recent work that attempts to deconstruct this homunculus through powerful learning mechanisms that allow a computational model of the frontal cortex to control itself and other brain areas in a strategic, task-appropriate manner. These learning mechanisms are based on structures in the basal ganglia (NAc, VTA, striosomes of the striatum, SNc) that can perform reinforcement learning of other basal ganglia structures (matrisomes of the striatum, GP, thalamus) that modulate ("gate") the activation of the frontal cortex working memory system. Computationally, the learning mechanism is designed to simultaneously solve the temporal and structural credit assignment problems. The model has been applied to a variety of challenging temporally-extended learning problems, including one that has been studied under fMRI in humans.

Friday, November 15, 2002
4:00 pm
Glaser Auditorium, LRDC
3939 O’Hara Street

Reception following Colloquium
MARK YOUR CALENDAR AND CHOOSE YOUR SONG!

HOLIDAY KARAOKE

The venue is new, but the format is the same...For better or worse, Psychology department faculty, staff and students will step up to the microphone to croon (squawk?) their favorite hits once again this holiday season.

Start choosing your songs now! There is still time to practice!

Don’t miss this one!
December 19, 2002
Skibo Coffee House, University Center
4pm-7pm
IF AIRLINES SOLD PAINT . . .

Customer: Hi. How much is your paint?
Clerk: Well, sir, that all depends on quite a lot of things.
Customer: Can you give me a guess? Is there an average price?
Clerk: Our lowest price is $12 a gallon, and we have 60 different prices up to $200 a gallon.
Customer: What's the difference in the paint?
Clerk: Oh, there isn't any difference; it's all the same paint.

Customer: Well, then I'd like some of that $12 paint.
Clerk: When do you intend to use the paint?
Customer: I want to paint tomorrow. It's my day off.
Clerk: Sir, the paint for tomorrow is the $200 paint.

Customer: When would I have to paint to get the $12 paint?
Clerk: You would have to start very late at night in about 3 weeks. But you will have to agree to start painting before Friday of that week and continue painting until at least Sunday.

Customer: You've got to be *&^%#@* kidding!
Clerk: I'll check and see if we have any paint available.
Customer: You have shelves FULL of paint! I can see it!
Clerk: But it doesn't mean that we have paint available. We sell only certain number of gallons on any given weekend. Oh, and by the way, the price per gallon just went to $16. We don't have any more $12 paint.

Customer: The price went up as we were talking?
Clerk: Yes, sir. We change the prices and rules hundreds of times a day, and since you haven't actually walked out of the store with your paint yet, we just decided to change. I suggest you purchase your paint as soon as possible. How many gallons do you want?
Customer: Well, maybe five gallons. Make that six, so I'll have enough.
Clerk: Oh no, sir, you can't do that. If you buy paint and don't use it, there are penalties and possible confiscation of the paint you already have.
Customer: WHAT?
Clerk: We can sell enough paint to do your kitchen, bathroom, hall and north bedroom, but if you stop painting before you do the bedroom, you will lose your remaining gallons of paint.
Customer: What does it matter whether I use all the paint? I already paid you for it!
Clerk: We make plans based upon the idea that all our paint is used, every drop. If you don't, it causes us all sorts of problems.
Customer: This is crazy!! I suppose something terrible happens if I don't keep painting until after Saturday night!
Clerk: Oh yes! Every gallon you bought automatically becomes the $200 paint.
Customer: But what are all these, "Paint on sale from $10 a litre" signs?
Clerk: Well that's for our budget paint. It only comes in half-gallons. One $5 half-gallon will do half a room. The second half-gallon to complete the room is $20. None of the cans have labels, some are empty and there are no refunds, even on the empty cans.
Customer: To hell with this! I'll buy what I need somewhere else!
Clerk: I don't think so, sir. You may be able to buy paint for your bathroom and bedrooms, and your kitchen and dining room from someone else, but you won't be able to paint your connecting hall and stairway from anyone but us. And I should point out, sir, that if you paint in only one direction, it will be $300 a gallon.
Customer: I thought your most expensive paint was $200!
Clerk: That's if you paint around the room to the point at which you started. A hallway is different.
Customer: And if I buy $200 paint for the hall, but only paint in one direction, you'll confiscate the remaining paint.
Clerk: No, we'll charge you an extra use fee plus the difference on your next gallon of paint. But I believe you're getting it now, sir.
Customer: You're insane!
Clerk: Thanks for painting with USAIR.