

Special Topic Seminar

Topic: Judgement and Decision: Cognitive, Behavioural, and Neurobiological Approaches

Semester: Winter, 2009?

Instructor: Peter Shizgal

Given a set of options, how do humans and other animals go about assigning a value to each and selecting the one that is “best?” This question has deep implications for what distinguishes normal from pathological behaviour, the wise from the foolish, the adaptive from the maladaptive. The psychological processes engaged in evaluation and choice include cognitive, perceptual, mnemonic, motivational, and affective components. Recent developments in neuropsychology, behavioural neuroscience, functional brain imaging, and the emerging discipline of neuroeconomics provide clues as to the underlying brain mechanisms as well as to the organization and nature of different neural subsystems engaged in evaluation and choice. Thus, the study of judgement and decision cuts across many areas of psychology and links psychology to research in several related disciplines.

This area tutorial on judgement and decision will be structured so as to encourage a multidisciplinary approach to the subject matter. Graduate students with backgrounds in different areas of our field are encouraged to take part in this seminar and to contribute to a cross-fertilization of ideas and outlooks. Given that decision and choice are also important topics in fields outside of psychology, such as behavioural ecology and economics, we will consider the benefits offered by ideas, perspectives, and methods in these fields to work in our own discipline.

Evaluation: One oral presentation, one paper, review of a paper written by a fellow student.