

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Inquiry at  
UST 2

Neuroscience  
Major 2

Neuroscience  
Club 2

Meet the  
EA's 3

EA Hours &  
Services 4

This Month in  
Psychology 4

## Election 2008 & Psychology

**Article Review:**  
Why Do We Vote?  
Original Article by  
Christopher Munsey

In this article, Munsey tries to answer the question of why people vote, considering that it generally takes time and effort that could conceivably be spent elsewhere. He considers many different studies that propose every reason from altruism to genetic influences. To read more, go to: <http://www.apa.org/monitor/2008/06/vote.html>

**Article Review:**  
This is Your Brain on Politics  
Original Article by  
Ian Herbert

Herbert begins by asserting that the founding fathers of the United States were hesitant from the beginning about politi-

cal parties and the campaigning that would ensue. One of the reasons for this is that a possi-



ble result of campaigning is emotions getting in the way of information. It has been shown that a person's chosen political party plays a big role both when he or she is voting and when deciding how he or she feels about political issues in general. Overall, information seems to have less of an impact on party affiliation than feelings.

It is a well-established fact of cognitive and social psychol-

ogy that people use shortcuts, also known as heuristics, to navigate through life. Herbert presents research that supports the idea that a person's political party affiliation could function as a heuristic. It has also been argued that ideology is a psychological trait and influences people's everyday lives. In addition, political ideology tends to be passed from generation to generation.

Finally, Herbert discusses the proximity effect that can emerge while a politician is campaigning. Basically, people prefer what is familiar; this provides an explanation for why political candidates are always shown interacting with many people and try to establish personal relationships with them. To read more visit: [www.psychologicalscience.org/observer/getArticle.cfm?id=2393](http://www.psychologicalscience.org/observer/getArticle.cfm?id=2393)

## Superstitions: True or False?

**Article Review:**  
The Many Lives of Superstition  
Original Article by  
Eric Wargo

This article addresses the possible reasons for belief in superstition. It begins by describing how superstition is a result of conditioning through a study con-

ducted by BF Skinner. In the study, hungry pigeons developed a strange rhythmic activity such as spinning in a circle, or bobbing its head in response to food dispensed at regular intervals. The pigeons developed a superstition about the source of food (Skinner, 1948), because it thought that the food being dispensed was the result of its behavior, therefore its behavior continued. Superstition arises due

to the brain's natural tendency to seek connections.

Next the article relates Skinner's study to humans and describes how they are conditioned to disproportionately notice chance occurrences biased to their own interests and priorities. Whether or not coincidence is random, it

*(Continued on page 3)*



*Four psychology majors who received a Young Scholars grant to participate in collaborative research presented at the 12th annual Inquiry at UST poster session*

## Inquiry at UST

On September 30th, four psychology majors who received a Young Scholars grant to participate in collaborative research with a faculty member during summer 2008 presented their research at the 12th annual Inquiry at UST poster session. At this symposium, Scott Dillon and Joe Grundtner presented research sponsored by Dr. Bock, Amy Gosselin by Dr. Robinson-Riegler, and Annie Gatto by Dr. Chalkley.

Scott's research examined how varying body types in U.S. college males affect what they perceive as being physically attractive in females. The results showed that men with

less appealing body types, according to society, tended to rate less appealing women as more attractive. Females' waist to hip ratio played a stronger role in males' attractiveness ratings for women than the females' body mass index.

Joe focused on the influence of gender, year of study, and expected course grade on students' moral reasoning and self-perception, while taking an ethics course. His results illustrated that gender, class year, and expected grade have little to no influence on students' moral reasoning and self-perception.

Amy studied the extent to which the association of per-

sonality with autobiographical memory influences the encoding or retrieval processes of these memories. The results indicated that personality differences in autobiographical memory relate to encoding rather than retrieval.

Annie examined the communication challenges between aging parents and their children in making important family decisions. Her results showed important issues in maintaining healthy relationships in communication and decision making include positive attitudes, recognizing and respecting boundaries, and maintaining regular contact.

## A New Major Stemming from the Brain

As of this fall, the University of St. Thomas is offering an interdisciplinary B.S. degree in the field of Neuroscience. This new major is jointly taught and administered by the biology and psychology departments, which allows for specialization in either discipline. Core courses provide a background in biology, chemistry, and psychology that aid in the understanding of upper level neuroscience courses. The goal of this research-intensive major is for students to understand relationships among nervous systems, neural processing, thought and behavior and to well-prepare students for graduate studies in related disciplines.



## Neuroscience Club





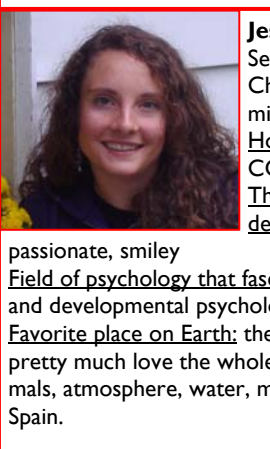

Along with the new Neuroscience major, comes a new club at UST. The mission of the student-led club is to unite and provide support for students and faculty whom have an existing interest in neuroscience. To achieve this mission, the club will host speakers to educate members about cur-

rent issues and research in the field, and will supply information pertaining to graduate school and career options. Club members will promote neuroscience by planning activities for the annual Brain Awareness Week in March.

**Watch for announcements about a speaker on Traumatic Brain Injury coming in mid-November!**

# Meet the Educational Assistants

You've seen them around the department and they've come into your classes to talk about the services they provide as EA's. But really, who are those people? They all answered some 'get-to-know you' questions so you could learn a bit more about them.

<p><b>Nikki Arola</b> Junior Psychology major with Sociology and Family Studies minors <u>Hometown:</u> Chisholm, MN <u>Three words she would use to describe herself:</u> passionate, determined, and quirky <u>Field of psychology that fascinates her the most::</u> I'm very interested in motivation specifically as it relates to sports. I also am very interested in childhood psychology. <u>Favorite place on Earth:</u> I have two favorite places. One is my cabin on a little lake in northern Minnesota. I spend every summer there with my family and I can't think of a better place to be in the summer. The other place is on the track. I love everything about being on the track. I spend a large portion of time there and always get a little happy high when I'm on it.</p>		<p><b>Sara Padley</b> Senior Elementary Education and Psychology Major <u>Hometown:</u> Rochester, MN <u>Three words she would use to describe herself:</u> patient, curious, musical <u>Field of psychology that fascinates her the most:</u> Educational psychology, including testing and assessment and motivation in the classroom <u>Favorite place on Earth:</u> Haliewa, Hawaii</p>	
<p><b>Jessica Connelly</b> Senior Psychology major with Chemistry and Catholic Studies minors <u>Hometown:</u> Colorado Springs, CO <u>Three words she would use to describe herself:</u> talkative, com- passionate, smiley <u>Field of psychology that fascinates her the most::</u> health and developmental psychology <u>Favorite place on Earth:</u> the ground—no seriously, I pretty much love the whole planet—trees, plants, animals, atmosphere, water, mountains, volcanoes. And Spain.</p>		<p><b>Jake Forsman</b> Junior Psychology major with a possible Statistics minor <u>Hometown:</u> Minneapolis, MN <u>Three words he would use to describe himself:</u> creative, determined, competitive <u>Field of psychology that fascinates him the most:</u> Behavioral neuroscience <u>Favorite place on Earth:</u> Vancouver, BC, Canada</p>	
	<p><b>Amy Gosselin</b> Senior Psychology and Catholic Studies major <u>Hometown:</u> Lincoln, NE <u>Three words she would use to describe herself:</u> content, flexible, intuitive <u>Field of psychology that fascinates her the most::</u> social cognition <u>Favorite place on Earth:</u> Rome, Italy...no question,</p>	<p><b>Brittni Peterson</b> Junior Neuroscience Major <u>Hometown:</u> Cedar, MN <u>Three words she would use to describe herself:</u> driven, creative, realistic <u>Field of psychology that fascinates her the most::</u> I am very interested in neuroscience, particularly drug mechanisms in the brain. <u>Favorite place on Earth :</u> Boundary Waters and the Adirondack Mountains in New York</p>	

## Superstition: True or False (continued from pg. 1)

reinforces neural connections and associations within the brain, which influence a person's perception.

Wargo then explains how the tendency to over-attribute casualty to one's own thoughts accounts for superstitious beliefs (Pronin, Wegner, McCarthy, Rodriguez, 2006). When people have thoughts consistent with certain actions prior to when they happen, people believe themselves to be the cause. In an experiment demonstrating this relationship, par-

ticipants mistakenly thought they had caused a cursor to stop moving on a computer screen if immediately beforehand they had been induced to think about stopping it (Wegner & Wheatley, 1999). Wegner argues that conscious will may be an illusion and that humans infer themselves to be the cause of their own actions because their thoughts coincide with their actions, when in actuality the actions themselves have non-conscious causes. Neurophysiologist

Benjamin Libet provides evidence to support Wegner's view. He found that motor movements experienced by participants as consciously willed were actually shown to be initiated in the brain prior to conscious intention (Libet, 1985). As we learn more about the brain, it may turn out that belief in free will is a superstitious belief in itself.

To read more visit: <http://www.psychologicalscience.org/observer/getArticle.cfm?id=2393>

Need Help With a Psychology Class or a Place to Study?

Come visit the EAs!

Hours: M-Th 4:30pm-9pm, Sunday: 6pm-9pm

Location: JRC LLO9 and LL54

Services: Tutoring, help with research and writing, study sessions, re-searching grad school and internship/job opportunities

Online help: Instant Messenger: AIM: ustpsychology

MSN Messenger: ustpsychology@hotmail.com

## This Month in Psychology: October

**October 1, 1890** — Mary W. Calkins overcame Harvard University's prohibition against female students and was allowed to enroll in a physiological psychology. Calkins later became president of the APA (1905).

**October 2, 1836** — Darwin returned to England on the *Beagle* after a 5-year voyage.

**October 5, 1713** — Denis Diderot was born. Diderot was a French empiricist and promoter of the scientific method. His *Encyclopedie*, one of the great works of the Enlightenment, contained an entry on psychology that disseminated the idea among educated people that behavior could be scientifically studied.

**October 6, 1868** — Charles J. Herrick was born. Herrick was a physiologist who studied the structure of the brain and found that the structures of lower animals form the basis of the human brain.

**October 11, 1885** — Sigmund Freud left Vienna to study under Jean-Martin Charcot in Paris. Freud's four-month sojourn at the Salpêtrière was so influential that Freud named his first son after Charcot.

**October 16, 1893** — G. Stanley Hall's *The Contents of Children's Minds on Entering School* was published. This was one of the first American books on child psychology and was based on data from questionnaires given to children.

**October 21, 1926** — Nadine Lambert was born. Lambert's research in educational settings has produced understanding of early identification and prevention of emotional disorders in children.

**October 27, 1832** — William Ireland was born. Ireland wrote the first well-organized and medically oriented text on mental retardation, *On Idiocy and Imbecility*.

**October 31, 1963** — The Community Mental Health Centers Act was signed by President Kennedy. This was the first federal legislation to support mental health facilities outside the model provided by large mental hospitals.