

InSight

The Newsletter of the
Department of Psychology

psychology.utk.edu

 PSYCHOLOGY

Austin Peay Building

One of the Oldest on Campus

What began in 1794 as a small college in the Southwest Territory is now Tennessee's flagship university and premier public research institution. For 225 years, Volunteers have been lighting the way for others, across Tennessee and throughout the world.

Our university serves our state, the nation, and the world by educating people, enhancing culture, and making a difference in lives through research and service. We embody excellence in teaching, research, scholarship, creative activity, outreach, and engagement, all while reflecting the Volunteer creed: "One that beareth a torch shadoweth oneself to give light to others."

As we celebrate the 225th anniversary of our university, it is worth noting the historic buildings that exist throughout our campus. One of those historic buildings is the Austin Peay Memorial Building, which houses most of the faculty and administrative staff of the Department of Psychology.

Last month, *The Torchbearer* published an article outlining the 10 oldest buildings on campus. Austin Peay, completed in 1911, is the sixth oldest building on campus.



"Austin Peay began as the Carnegie Library. It was renovated and renamed for Tennessee Governor Austin Peay in the 1930s when the UT administration moved there. In 1952, an addition was completed. In 1973, the administration relocated and Austin Peay became home to the Department of Psychology," according to the article.

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FALL 2019

Insight from the Head

Greetings alumni and friends,

The fall semester is underway! We are delighted to see our students, including our brand new neuroscience majors, back on campus and energized for a new academic year. We are teaching lots of classes in classrooms all over the campus. Our faculty and students are getting in plenty of steps!

We re-energized our UT Psychology Facebook page this semester and plan to initiate an Instagram feed shortly. We have a strong group of 12 psychology majors who have volunteered to serve as UT Psychology Social Media Ambassadors this year under the supervision of Bob DuBois, our new associate undergraduate program director. I hope you will check out and 'like' our newly revitalized Facebook page! I hope it will help us stay more connected to our students and alumni.

The psychology faculty had a productive retreat last spring and focused on sharing best practices for mentoring students. Our faculty care a lot about the quality of mentoring we provide to our students and continuously strive to best help our students learn and develop. We recently crafted a departmental mentoring statement that includes our values and mission for mentoring. It is posted on our website (psychology.utk.edu). Some of our graduate students created a survey to assess the departmental mentoring climate and provided feedback about departmental strengths and growth areas. We remain committed to regular departmental assessments that will lead us to pinpoint areas for growth and lead to continued excellence in all aspects of our mission.

We are excited to partner with the Department of Psychology at Tennessee State University in Nashville to sponsor a graduate student recruitment event taking place in November. We value the excellent teaching and mentoring our colleagues across the state do with their psychology undergraduate students and are excited to develop relationships with them to facilitate a pipeline for graduate students from our own state. We hope to expand the partnership to other state institutions in the future.

We have some new faculty around Austin Peay this semester. Caglar Tas recently joined our cognitive and developmental science area as a new assistant professor. Sarah Lamer just moved to Knoxville from Denver to join our social psychology area as a new assistant professor. We are also grateful to have hired our first associate head of undergraduate studies, Bob DuBois. You can read more about these three new psychology faculty on pages 4-6.

In spite of the challenging start to our football season this year, we are hopeful our team will learn from the challenges they faced and the season will improve. Thanks to everyone who came out for our Third Annual Fall Alumni Gathering for Friday, October 25 at Calhouns on the River. We enjoyed seeing our alumni, friends, faculty, and staff during the event regardless of their football affiliation. If you were not able to join us, we hope you make plans for our next event during fall 2020.

I hope that you and your family are well. I always love to hear from our alumni so please keep in touch! *Go Vols!*

Best wishes,



DEBORAH WELSH

Professor and Head

New Neuroscience Major in the Department of Psychology

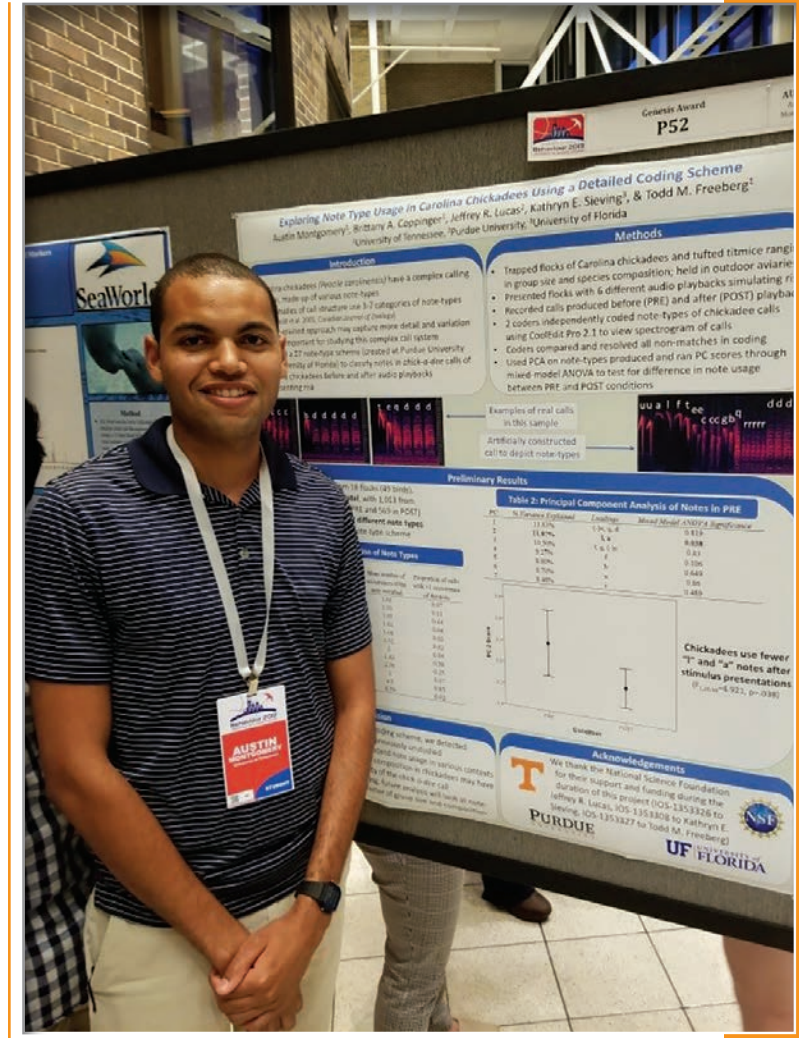
The academic discipline of neuroscience encompasses a wide array of fields including cellular, molecular, genetic, behavioral, evolutionary, computational, and medical aspects of the nervous system. It is an interdisciplinary science that links closely with other disciplines, such as mathematics, engineering, computer science, chemistry, biology, philosophy, psychology, and medicine. Students who study neuroscience will be afforded numerous career opportunities in both private and public sectors including universities, research institutes, government facilities, industry, and medicine.

“I plan on continuing my education at a medical school and hopefully pursuing a career in neurology,” said **Austin Montgomery**, a current undergraduate student in neuroscience. “Faculty in the department have set me up with some amazing neurologist to shadow and a career working with the brain is something I would love to do.”

During the fall 2013 semester, neuroscience became a concentration in the Interdisciplinary Programs Major (BA). Thirty eight students took advantage of this opportunity in the first year, with most transferring into neuroscience from other majors. During the next five years, the neuroscience concentration experienced explosive growth with nearly 400 students studying neuroscience by the 2018 fall semester, making it one of the largest areas of study in the College of Arts and Sciences.

This fall is of particular significance as neuroscience will no longer be a concentration, but a stand-alone major (BS). The transition from a BA to a BS degree has been particularly well-received by students as it more accurately reflects the major’s emphasis on the hard sciences. Moreover, neuroscience will become a separate undergraduate program in the Department of Psychology, giving it an administrative home. Austin Montgomery is one of these recent students in the BS major, aiming to graduate this academic year.

“I think the change to make neuroscience an official BS major is not only important to current students



like me, but also to prospective students who might be on the fence when it comes to picking a university or major,” Montgomery said. “When I came to UT, I started as an exploratory student with a focus in science, but I think if the BS in neuroscience had been available, I for sure would have started in it, and maybe explored the field more than I already have. I am happy that future students will get that early introduction into the field and become better scientist because of it.”

UT’s mission as the land grant university is to “move forward the frontiers of human knowledge and enrich and elevate the citizens of the state of Tennessee, the nation and the world” Further, UT “embodies the spirit of excellence in teaching, research, scholarship, creative activity, outreach, and engagement.” A key Volunteer Value touts the importance of seeking knowledge through “intellectual growth, a lifelong pursuit of knowledge, and a sharing of this knowledge.” The newly-established neuroscience major advances UT’s mission and values by preparing students for many types of careers that meet these stated goals.

Bob DuBois

Lecturer & Associate Director of Undergraduate Studies



Bob DuBois joined our department this year as the associate director of undergraduate studies and lecturer of psychology. This fall, he is teaching an honors section of General Psychology and two sections of Research Methods in Psychology. Despite a wealth of experience teaching a variety of online, hybrid, and on-campus courses, DuBois values lifelong, continuous learning and blogs about it with The Novice Professor team.

As a first-generation college graduate (a reason he goes by “Dr. Bob”), DuBois is a tireless advocate for student success and student-centered teaching. Prior to joining us, he worked for 12 years as lead psychology instructor at

Waukesha County Technical College in Pewaukee, Wisconsin. There, he developed and facilitated a series of four popular Lifelong Learning Workshops (Crush Bad Study Habits, Don't Eat the Marshmallow, Take Note, and Getting Things Done), a course, College Success Strategies: The Science of Successful Learning, and a lifelong learning book club for faculty and staff. He plans to host workshops for our undergraduate psychology students beginning this fall.

DuBois is a frequent public speaker on college success (Transforming Students to Learners and Transforming Instructors to Learning Facilitators), youth culture (Today's Youth: More Alike Than Different, Not Worse, But (Perhaps) Better), mental health (Today's Youth in Crisis), and suicide prevention. He is a master QPR Suicide Prevention Gatekeeper trainer and has multiple certifications with Quality Matters in online course design.

DuBois is active on social media and will be managing the department's Facebook page. If you have not liked the page already, please do so now (and send him items you think would be great to post on the page). DuBois hosts several Facebook pages focused on sharing psychology with his learners and the world, including Get Psyched with Dr. Bob, Learning to Learn with Dr. Bob, Abnormal Psychology with Dr. Bob, and Developmental Psychology with Dr. Bob, a Facebook group called Lifelong Learning in Higher Education, and a popular twitter feed @psychoBOBlog.

DuBois holds a PhD in counseling/educational psychology from Marquette University and master's degrees in counseling psychology and industrial/organizational psychology from the University of Texas at Tyler and Western Kentucky University, respectively. Prior to teaching, DuBois worked as a research scientist, human factors engineer, and human resources manager and consultant. Much of DuBois's research experience involved the use of simulation networking (SIMNET) for combat training and for evaluations of notional weapon system technologies. He hopes to engage in research in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) at UT.

DuBois, his wife (Lois), and youngest daughter (Isabella) moved to Knoxville this summer. Isabella will be a fourth grader at Northshore Elementary School and loves gymnastics. She recently joined the Tennessee Elite Gymnastics level four competitive team. Lois is an engineering graduate from the University of Wisconsin at Madison and will be seeking a local sales engineering or related job soon. They also have an older daughter, Hannah, who will graduate with an engineering degree from the University of Minnesota this fall, and an older son, Brandon, who works as a computer scientist in Los Angeles. Brandon is married to Lindsey, also a computer scientist, and they have two sons, Jacob and Dominick.

Sarah Lamer

Associate Professor



In most modern societies, inequities based on gender, race, and other identities persist despite explicit efforts to eliminate them. Social psychologists have long established that how people are evaluated often hinges on aspects of their identity, such as their gender, sexual orientation, and race, as well as intersections thereof. We also know that there are enormous consequences for evaluating people on the groups with which they identify, including legal policies that disadvantage certain groups, differences in medical treatments prescribed to patients, and even inequities in hiring and promotion. But how are these biases learned? Much less is known about the cultural and social mechanisms through which such biases are transmitted. That is where Sarah Lamer's research comes in.

Lamer studies how people may develop beliefs about essentialism, stereotypes, and group norms as a function of patterns typical to their social environments. For example, she recently published work consistent with the theory that gender stereotypes about power can be communicated by where people are located in space (i.e., men higher than women). She has also examined how patterns of emotion in Instagram images may transmit race essentialism and how patterns of nonverbal behavior on television may transmit beliefs about how girls and boys should behave. How patterns like these contribute to stereotypes is likely complex. There are a range of possible mechanisms, and Lamer employs a variety of tools to examine them including vision science, reaction-time tasks, reverse correlation, eye-tracking, meta-analysis, and statistical modelling. For example, she has found that people see faces as more masculine if they appear high (vs. low) in space. This is consistent with gender differences in height (i.e., men are generally taller than women) and suggests that how we perceive faces adapts to patterns we typically observe in the world. In other work, Lamer and her colleagues have found that how people visually perceive emotion in racially-diverse crowds predicts their own racial beliefs. Future work in her lab, the Social Perception and Cognition (SPĀC) lab, will examine these and other mechanisms of belief transmission. Check out the SPĀC (*pronunciation: space*) lab website (spaclab.com) for more information!

When Lamer is not programming a new study or running data analysis, you can generally find her gardening, cooking, or playing with her two cats. She was born and raised in Colorado and thus loves a good rainstorm, questions the freshness of all seafood, and cannot get enough of the mountains. Lamer graduated from the University of Denver with a PhD in social, affective, and cognitive psychology in 2019. Prior to that, she attended Connecticut College where she earned a BA in psychology with a certificate in public policy and community action.

Caglar Tas

Associate Professor



Did you know that you are basically blind to the outside world during the time you move your eyes? This phenomenon is called saccadic suppression of vision, where visual information is suppressed shortly before and during saccades, which are fast movements of the eyes from one point to another. Healthy human adults move their eyes three to four times per second to gain information about the visual world. In addition to the saccades, our visual system also gets disrupted by eye blinks and head and body movements. With so many disruptions, why do we never perceive the world in snapshots? When we look around, the world seems smooth, stable, and continuous. How does our brain fill in these gaps of information?

In the Visual Perception and Cognition Lab (VPC Lab), Caglar Tas and her students investigate the mechanisms by which our visual system establishes continuous perception of the visual world across saccadic eye movements. Specifically, Tas's primary research focuses on how object information is represented and updated across saccadic eye movements and how visual attention (where we attend to, not necessarily where we look) affects how we perceive objects across saccades. Tas also studies whether we encode everything we look at (the answer: mostly, yes) or everything we attend to without moving our eyes (the answer: no). To investigate these topics, she employs behavioral (e.g., accuracy or reaction time), eye-tracking (e.g., saccadic reaction time, saccade curvature, fixation duration) and neural (blood flow) measures using functional near-infrared spectroscopy (fNIRS).

Tas received her BA in psychology and her MA in cognitive psychology from Bogazici University in Turkey. During her time at Bogazici, she worked on a variety of topics in cognition, such as the reasons why adults remember more words from their adolescent years, the factors affecting adults' memory of their childhood, memory distortions in patients with eating disorders, and perceptual reasons for why people recognize faces from their own-race better than the other-race faces. In 2008, she moved to the US and received her PhD from the University of Iowa in 2015. During her time at Iowa, her research mainly focused on the role of surface feature information (e.g., color) on object representations across visual disruptions, such as motion and saccades. She has been at the University of Tennessee since 2014, first as a lecturer then as a research assistant professor. She has been teaching PSYC 295 (Introduction to Research Methods) and PSYC 395 (Advanced Research Methods) and has been the coordinator of the PSYC 295 course. She is the recipient of 2019 National Eye Institute Early Career Scientist Travel Grant from the Vision Sciences Society.

Growing up by the Aegean Sea, Tas spent most of her spare time doing water activities, such as swimming, wind surfing, and building sandcastles. Since moving to the US, she has been acquiring new hobbies, such as hiking, swimming and paddle boarding in lakes, and gardening. She has extensive knowledge of Mediterranean and Middle Eastern food, which she enjoys cooking at home.

Lee Rideout Receives 2019 Outstanding Financial Support Award



Todd M. Freeberg, professor and associate head of psychology, stands with Lee Rideout at the spring staff appreciation event.

Lee Rideout received the College of Arts and Sciences 2019 Outstanding Financial Support Award during the annual spring staff appreciation event for her careful and crucial work in the department. Rideout manages all aspects of the department's finances, including the operating budgets, salary budgets for faculty, staff, and students, all internal and external grant budgets, budget transfers within the university, and all gift account budgets. She has done an excellent job of managing all these moving parts in her eight years in the department. The graduate student budget was particularly tricky in the past year, due to campus changes in graduate student salary policies.

Rideout also calculates and provides guidance regarding costs associated with graduate student budgeting for faculty members submitting external research grant proposals. She also manages the Cayuse submission process for departmental external grants. Psychology faculty increased grant submissions and included more graduate student funding in their budgets in the past couple of years, so this portion of her job has expanded. Rideout handled all fiscal processes well last year. The department was not overspent and all funds were handled well.

Congratulations to Lee Rideout for her exceptional work and accomplishment!

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

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