

Department of Psychology

Happy Summer!

With exams behind us, summer break is almost here and we look forward to less stressful times. While the department feels much quieter during the summer months, there is still a lot going on: staff focus more strongly on their research and often prepare and trial experiments that will run in the fall. Master students are busy working on their dissertation and many of them will look for volunteers to participate in their studies - speaking of volunteers, why don't you offer to help them? Similarly, many of our new third year students will start preparing their final year project over the summer.

In addition, many of our current students will be carrying out volunteer work. Others will use the lecture free time to work on their future career in other ways (e.g. paid internships). As we all know, it is never too early to start preparing for your dream job. Thus, the newsletter team decided to create this special Summer Edition to give you ideas about what you can do to find out what you are interested in. We also include some information about our Masters programmes for those who are still toying with the idea of applying for taught postgraduate study. And don't forget, as an Essex alumni, you are entitled to the Essex loyalty discount which means that you will get a ten percent discount on your first year of tuition fee for postgraduate study! Finally, our prospective students can learn a bit about student life at Essex from reading this issue.

We hope that you will enjoy this special edition and please don't hesitate to get in touch and tell us what you think! - also, please let us know of anything you might want to read about in the future. Happy summer, everyone!



William Matthews wins Employability Award

From a group of seven academics, Psychology lecturer Dr. William Matthews was selected as winner of the University's *Big e Employability Champion Award*. The award serves to recognize Dr. Matthew's contribution to help student employability: For instance, he organized a "Careers Panel" event during which final year students met representatives from various branches of the psychology professions to learn about different careers and how to get into them. He also established Careers Sessions in Years 1 and 2 as a timetabled part of the curriculum. In these sessions, students receive advice on career planning. Dr. Matthews also prepared a "Careers Pack" for final year students, which provides advice and information about seeking and obtaining employment. The awards were presented by Prof. Jules Pretty, Deputy Vice Chancellor, at an awards ceremony sponsored by Santander on June 8th.

Making the right decision: is a Masters course for you?

by Natalie Kwok

When someone mentions a Masters course what thoughts automatically come to your mind? Perhaps that it is a postgraduate course or that it takes about a year to achieve, or possibly that you know someone enrolled on one? A lot of the descriptions of the courses seem factual and few focus on the purpose. Understanding the content of a Masters course is important because, for those of you who are considering a specific career choice or further education, a thorough knowledge of the subject matter is needed to help you make the right decisions.

So, why study a Masters course? Briefly speaking, MSc courses (Masters in Science) or MA courses (Masters in Art) are designed to specialise in certain fields with the help of a solid education. Usually people who need a certain qualification for specific employment will choose to enroll on a Masters course. For example, if you want to become a counselor, you could complete an MA or MSc in counseling therapy or an equivalent subject.

Your preference for teaching style can also play a role in choosing a Masters course. Some Masters require you to undertake taught modules while others allow the option to concentrate on research, only. These schemes require a dissertation and examination at the end of the course only.

Apart from specialisation, a Masters also

allows another opportunity to gain a higher class mark. For those who feel that their career progression is hindered by a lower class mark from their undergraduate degree, Masters can provide a chance to prove the ability and gain a higher mark in a field that really interests them. This is beneficial to prospective career considering that employment is becoming highly competitive. A Masters course with high marks will certainly improve chances of entering into an ideal career.

There are obvious reasons and factors to consider when choosing a Masters course, such as the expense and time. However, the first question to ask yourself is, "what is my ideal career?" Then research to find out the requirements and qualifications. Perhaps an MSc is the ideal choice?

MSc Programmes at the Department of Psychology

The department offers a variety of courses that allow studying psychology at postgraduate level. For instance, students who enjoyed working on their final year project may want to embark on an *MSc by Dissertation*. It provides an opportunity to work full-time for 12 months on a supervised research project without the requirement to undertake any taught modules. Assessment is based entirely on a research dissertation. Thus, this MSc provides a halfway-house between an UG research project and a PhD.

Those who want to learn more about neural mechanisms underlying human behaviour or who want to explore how the structure and function of the brain relate to specific psychological processes should have a look at our *MSc Cognitive Neuroscience* or the *MSc Cognitive Neuropsychology*. If you prepare for an academic career, or careers in fields such as education and marketing you will profit from our *MSc Research Methods*.

Next to providing you with an advanced education in the core areas of psychology, our courses will help strengthen your numeracy and literacy skills, but also other transferable skills such as problem solving, data analysis, presentation, and team working. To find out more about the MSc courses offered by the Department, visit our website: <http://www.essex.ac.uk/psychology/department/MSc/> or get in touch with a member of staff.

Special Topics in Social Psychology

While the Department currently does not offer a specialized course in Social Psychology at the Masters level, students still have the opportunity to learn more about special topics in social psychology. In response to popular demand, we introduced *PS933: Special Topics in Social Psychology* in the 2012 Spring term. By most accounts, the module was a great success and was well received by the students.

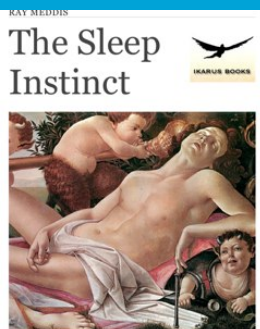
Unlike conventional modules, PS933 is a “seminar” module. This means that students aren’t given lectures and don’t take examinations. Instead, they are responsible for weekly readings, and they complete a variety of coursework assignments, including thought papers, seminar leading, seminar participation, and a coursework essay on a topic that interested them the most during the module. The weekly seminars, which involved discussions of the readings and were led by the students, covered a variety of social psychology topics, such as

evolutionary social psychology, emotion, social justice, existential psychology, intergroup bias, and health psychology. An academic member of staff facilitated a seminar that was within their own area of research expertise (all 8 of the academic staff in the Social Psychology Research Group participated in the module this year).

Given its success, we will be running PS933 again in the 2013 Spring Term. If you have any questions about the module, please feel free to contact Dr. Mitch Callan (mcallan@essex.ac.uk).

News in brief

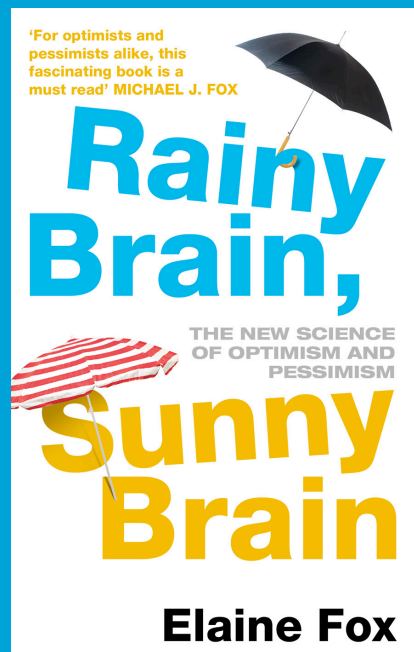
- Psychology Prof. Elaine Fox just published her most recent book *Rainy Brain, Sunny Brain* in the UK. To find out more go to <http://www.rainybrainsunnybrain.com>
- Together with other academics from the University of Essex and London South Bank University (LSBU), Prof. Riccardo Russo has been awarded approx. £1,700k in funding for a research project that will help consumers reduce their energy consumption via intelligent wireless sensor systems.
- Dr. Netta Weinstein received £7500 for the project “Finding Frames for Nature”. The project analyzes the content of conservation NGO’s appeals to the public, government, and business to assess the use of goal-laden content in these messages. The research team is particularly interested to see what kinds of values are elicited and which types of aspirations. The project is funded by 12 conservation-based



NGOs, with the majority of the funds coming from World Wildlife Fund, and the Royal Society for the protection of birds.

- The British Psychology Society is funding (£2000) work carried out by Prof. Sheina Orbell and Dr. Netta Weinstein: “Promoting Pro-Environmental Behavior in University Communities: The Case of Transition Universities.”

- *The Sleep Instinct* by Prof. Ray Meddis has now been published as an ebook. It is available as an iBook for the iPad at IKARUS BOOKS or for the Kindle at AMAZON.



More choices!

By Lisa Phillips

In past editions we have been introducing the third year undergraduate psychology modules available for second year students to choose from. This month finishes off that short guide.

PS487 Emotion: "This module is concerned with the study of emotional behaviour and experience from a scientific point of view. The emphasis throughout the module is on how emotions arise and are manifest as patterns of bodily response and mental activity. Theories of emotion from psychodynamic, introspective, and constructionist positions will not form a major component of the course, although some of the important insights which these approaches have offered will be considered. We will

examine theories of both normal and abnormal emotion. The former will receive the lion's share of our attention, but the case studies on particular emotions (e.g. fear) include discussion of their pathological extensions (anxiety and phobia). The module is delivered through lecture podcasts and a weekly seminar. The assessment for this module will be 75% examination and 25% coursework test." – *Dr Tracy Robinson*

PS454 Hearing Speech and Music: "This course picks up where the lectures in PS414 Cognitive Psychology left off. The devotion of an entire course to the subject of auditory perception allows ample time to cover some more interesting aspects of hearing, particularly perceptual organization of complex sounds. These are the sounds that one hears in the

real world, rather than the pure tones that were discussed in year two. In particular, there are lectures devoted to the perception of pitch and loudness, of location and space, of sounds in a sequence, and in speech and music perception. The course includes many examples of the effects of organization on sound perception, and the way that the result of organization can influence perception of speech and of music." – *Dr Deborah Fantini*

Hopefully, this series has provided an insight into what is available next year. Obviously, there is also the option of choosing from a wealth of outside options too. The University website lists more details. Unlike the second year, this is your chance to choose options that are of the most interest to you. So chose wisely....and enjoy them!

Introducing the Psychology Newsletter Group

Since September 2011 the Psychology newsletter aims to keep staff, students and anyone interested in psychology updated with what is happening in the Department. Members of the Psychology Newsletter Group (PNG) have written articles ranging from current research within the Department, psychology related book and film reviews to articles related to psychology student matters, and much more. The newsletter is available on the Psychology Department website (www.essex.ac.uk/psychology/) and previous issues can also be accessed from there.

Together with Dr. Paulmann, the team members Natalie Kwok (Editor Research), Lisa Phillips (Editor Students) and Shannon Jackman (Editor Miscellaneous) meet monthly to discuss forthcoming editions. We always welcome contributions from others, whether it be a 'one-off' article or on a continuous basis. From October, our meetings will be open to anyone who wants to drop-in to share their ideas, ask for something in particular to be featured, or to write an article or interview themselves. The team is also looking for additional editors for various fields including Design and Production. Why not join the PNG team? The PNG has given volunteers an excellent opportunity to build a strong rapport with staff and fellow students and also provides experience in improving literacy skills, team-work and meeting deadlines.

Work Experience and Careers Advice

By Lisa Phillips

Many students embark on degrees without a definite career path or without being aware of the importance of work experience. Empirical studies show that students with work experience find employment more quickly and easily. Some students without relevant experience may find they have to get it after graduation before applying for paid employments. The University of Essex offers students help with careers advice and on gaining work experience. In order to guide you through options available to you, I have researched and collaborated relevant information.

Careers Events: Many students from the Psychology Department attended the Options Fair as well as the Psychology Panel, examples of just two of the events that provide more information about different types of work. They are a good opportunity to seek further advice from experts if you are not sure of what you want to do as well as a great place to make some contacts to assist you with future advice.

Careers Centre (www.essex.ac.uk/careers): They offer all sorts of resources for advice, guidance

and support to help you find and get the job you want, including one-on-one meetings. They are located on Square 2. The resources they offer include:

- One-to-one guidance
- On-line self-assessment tools
- Careers literature
- graduate job listings
- CV workshops and feedback sessions
- Interview advice
- Practice materials for psychometric tests

Work experience: Employers are usually very keen for applicants to demonstrate work experience. Work experience serves several functions. For instance, it prepares you for life outside academia, and demonstrates that you can thrive in the workplace as well as in an academic setting. It also equips you with additional skills and develops the skills acquired in your degree. Finally, it demonstrates commitment to a particular type of career.

The University offers several schemes to help you get the work experience you need including the Frontrunners scheme (for internal work placements - see www.essex.ac.uk/frontrunners), the Internship schemes (for external work placements) and the vTeam (for voluntary work). Students can apply to the Inspiring

Internships Scheme at internships@essex.ac.uk for internships and placements with local and national businesses and charities.

Many students also organise their own *voluntary work*. Organisations, charities, and voluntary groups are often keen to have psychology students do voluntary work. Some organisations that have taken previous students as volunteers include: MIND (mental health charity), Autism Anglia (autism charity), Headway (brain injury charity), Relate (relationship advice/counselling service), Richmond Fellowship (mental health organization), Colchester General Hospital, Nacro (crime reduction organization with mental health division), The School Experience Programme (programme offering experience in secondary school classrooms for those considering a career in teaching), and Cool2Care (organisation which recruits and trains carers for children with disabilities).

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60 seconds with...

Dr. Helge Gillmeister



What is your main area of research? The concept of the self has always fascinated me - how our bodily sensations and our actions in the world

give rise to it. That's why my work is all about the body, how we represent it and how we process information related to the body, such as touch.

What would you be doing if you weren't a researcher?

I'm really interested in prosthetics, so I'd love to build fully functional artificial limbs for people.

What's your favourite book/film?

I wouldn't call anything my all-time favourite but I've immensely enjoyed reading books like Harper Lee's *To kill a mockingbird*, William Goldman's *The princess bride*, and Milan Kundera's *Immortality*. With films it's

even worse as I like almost all of them. The only film I ever walked out of is Michael Haneke's (1997) *Funny Games*. There's a very interesting story about people's need for violence behind it though.

If you were deserted on an Island what would you take with you? Oh no, it's the desert island question! I'm

supposed to say a piano because I've always wanted to learn, but really I'd want a decent pair of shoes, a swiss army knife, matches, and some beers to go with the wild hog roast I'll be making. And a piano.

Research Experience Scheme:

Interview with Chelsea Harmsworth (year 2 student)

Lisa Phillips interviewed Psychology student Chelsea Harmsworth who took part in the Departmental Research Experience Scheme (RES) in both the autumn and spring term this year. Chelsea worked in a research area together with a staff member of her choice, continuing the same research over the two terms. Her time commitment was set to five hours per week throughout the course of each term.

In her first term, Chelsea read papers around the area she was working in. After receiving initial training on how to run EEG

studies, Chelsea was also able to collect several data sets herself.

Chelsea re-applied in the second term and was fortunate enough to be accepted on the same research project. This term she was shown how to use a computer software package used to clean up data for analysis. Chelsea cleaned up and analysed many data sets, a lengthy process but one that she enjoyed gaining experience in.

Chelsea also carried out thorough literature searches researching papers related to the current research as well more methodological papers. This gave her valuable transferable skills as literature searches need to be performed throughout a Psychology degree.

Upon successful completion, Chelsea received her official certificates signed by her supervisor and the Head of Department. Chelsea also asked

her supervisor for a reference letter.

Depending on the number of staff members participating in the scheme in any given term, there are only a limited number of places available. This makes the scheme highly competitive. Chelsea felt privileged to have been chosen twice and would advise students to "go for it as soon as possible"! She thoroughly enjoyed the hands-on research experience as something very different to other areas of her study. Chelsea found that she got to know members of staff better and, as there are many Psychology students, this was a good way for her to "stand out from the crowd" whilst gaining knowledge. Chelsea found the RES "a great experience!" and would highly recommend it.

A day in a student's life

by Natalie Kwok

Lectures, tutorials, and lab classes - for a psychology student these will make up our schedule for the next few academic years. As challenging and time consuming as they can be, they do not solely take up every hour of our three, ten-week, terms. On the contrary, on a regular day you find yourself outside the lecture hall planning some entertaining activity to fill the rest of your evening. The crucial question comes down to "what to do?"

In my experience, the answer to this question will come from your experience of the first few weeks at University. During that time you'll have established a 'den' in either your own flat or someone else's and, for some inexplicable reason, you'll live the rest

of your year with the people there. Later, they'll become your new crazy flatmates. The first protocol for an average university student is to lounge back at the flat and finish off the remainder of the latest TV show on BBC iPlayer. Upon finishing the episode, you would have arranged to hang out with some friends at one of the Student Union's (SU) venues. The time is approximately 2pm and you're now down at either the SU bar or Top bar (another SU venue) for a game of pool or just a lounge around, having a pint, and watching a football match on TV. Then, at night, the SU host an event at one of the campus's night venues, Sub Zero or Level2, for a good night out.

This average daily routine is just a simplistic outlook of a student who has not committed to any societies or sports clubs. Generally, most of the student population are part of at least one society and vari-

ous sports clubs. These can range from the Psychology Society to the Film Society or athletics to trampolining. If you're committed to a sport, there are generally two training sessions and one competition per week. While the societies host many an event for their members, dependant on the type of society. See the article "Psychology Society" for more details.

Indeed socialising is one of the main components of student life but each student can choose to their heart's content. That is the freedom of being at University. There are responsibilities and expectations both morally and academically but we are independent. Student life falls around the same social sphere but beyond the social world there's a wealth of other opportunities (such as volunteering, writing for the newspaper and getting a job) that students choose to do. Simply speaking, a student's life is about getting out what you put in and it can be whatever you make it.



Watch us on
youtube!

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T5ly7hJUrtQ>



Students during summer holiday

by Natalie Kwok

When we were young, the near prospect of summer always included people asking one another, "What's your plan for the summer holiday?" And in reply, there's always something seemingly fun and adventurous to look forward to. Now in university, summer holiday starts from mid-June to beginning of October leaving us with quality (minus the weather) three and a half month's holiday. The question remains, "What's your plan for the summer holiday?" The competitive nature of the working world doesn't leave students with many options than to buckle up and work for the summer holidays. Although this prospect may seem dull, many people actually have chosen some inventive yet productive ways to gain work experience.

A popular option this year chosen by many students is to teach English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). One of the biggest appeals of this option is travelling to another country with minimal expense. Generally, a lot of organisations provide room and board at the chosen location and, if you're lucky, a weekly wage toward your contribution. In addition, a TEFL certificate is not required; the only requirement is fluency in English because they usually provide a training course before you start. This type of work allows individuals to choose

where they want to teach and who they want to teach. For example, I know of a student travelling to Cambodia for one month during the summer to teach young children English; while another student is travelling to Turkey to teach a family English. The flexibility of TEFL is a good option to all students because the experience provides communication and organisational skills that are applicable to many areas in life.

Another simpler yet productive option chosen by many students is to volunteer. Internships are often limited and competitive leaving many difficulties finding experience during summer. However, people now choose volunteering as a similar option to an actual paid internship. The biggest advantage to volunteering is the flexibility. With a regular job or internship, there's usually a set time, agenda, and expectation but with volunteering there's a leniency towards your position. For example, with volunteering you can usually choose the day, time and regularity to work. Also, the choice of work is more flexible towards your interests. With this flexibility, you can work part-time and volunteer. Some might think volunteering involves tedious admin work or just helping out at a nursing home. However, there are plenty of fun volunteering schemes. For example, I know of many Essex students who will participate in the Olympic and Para-

lympics volunteering scheme, gamemakers. This scheme needs thousands of volunteers to help in many areas, such as timing competition or assisting athletes in the Olympic village. This type of experience is a once in a lifetime opportunity and favourable on a CV. The most important criterion is to volunteer for a position beneficial to your future career but also one to interest you in an engaging way.

There's an all-consuming factor of work, job, and experience but that's not the sole purpose of summer. Summer is a time to enjoy the sun in an exotic country where the sun actually shines during summer holidays. For some students, this is one of the only years where they'll be transitioning from an undergraduate degree to a post-graduate degree. This means a relaxing summer with no worries of upcoming projects or modules at University. This is the time to enjoy seeing friends and going on holiday free from any stress or expectations. So, remember to play as much as you work!

