# PSYCHOLOGY SEMINAR DESCRIPTIONS (FALL 2018)

**PSY 420F – Evolutionary Perspectives on Social Psychology**

In this course we will explore evolutionary approaches to predicting and explaining human social behavior. We will critically consider these perspectives' strengths and weaknesses, examining their assumptions, methods, and theoretical tools. What are better and worse ways to adopt an evolutionary perspective? How do evolutionary perspectives generate hypotheses about human social behavior, and how are these hypotheses tested? We will discuss readings that apply evolutionary approaches to understanding motivation, relationships, prejudice, intergroup relations, social learning, cultural evolution, and other topics. **Dr. Rebecca Neel, Tuesdays 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.**

**PSY 420F – The Psychology of Human Sexuality**

Sexuality is a topic of growing interest in psychology. Although sexual selection is arguably the strongest driver of human evolution and the management of sexual needs is deeply intertwined with cultural practices, psychology has left many fundamental questions regarding human sexuality largely unanswered. This course will survey multiple issues including sexual orientation, sexual attraction, short and long term sexual relationships, sexual fantasy, and paraphilias. It will also include outside speakers with relevant expertise. *Please be aware that we will be covering some very sensitive material.* **Dr. Geoff MacDonald, Thursdays 1 – 3 p.m.**

**PSY 471F – Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience**

This course will ask how changes in the developing brain and its plasticity can help us understand cognitive development and learning. To answer this question, we will first briefly survey methods in (developmental) cognitive neuroscience and go over the process of human brain development. We will then review core concepts including plasticity, the role of experience in brain development, and the specialization of brain regions. Finally, we will cover specific topics including the development of sensory and motor systems and the development of multiple aspects of learning and memory. In all cases, we will ask whether neural measures and indices of brain plasticity inform our understanding of how cognitive processes change with age. Successful completion of ***PSY202H1*** and ***PSY270H1*** is required; ***PSY210H1*** and ***PSY493H1*** are recommend. **Dr. Amy Finn, Mondays 11 a.m. – 1 p.m.**

**PSY 471F – Visual Cognition**

This course will examine current issues in the field of visual cognition. Researchers in visual cognition take the perspective that vision is an active process, and our visual perceptions are not solely based on visual sensations, but also involve a host of ongoing cognitive processes such as attention, priming, visual working memory, and motor programming. This course will use articles recently published in the top journals in the field to gain insights into how our cognitive processes combine with our visual processes to determine what we see (or, at least, what we think we see). In addition to reading current research papers, the seminar will involve discussions, oral presentations, thought experiments, and two written assignments. ***PSY202H1***, ***PSY270H1***, and ***PSY280H1*** are required prerequisites for this particular subtopic. **Dr. Jay Pratt, Fridays 2 – 4 p.m.**