BRAIN JOURNAL CLUB
HISTORICAL AND CURRENT PERSPECTIVES IN NEUROSCIENCE

GMS6029-- FALL/2018
1 CREDITS

CLASS LOCATION: MBI BUILDING, L1-101

MEETING TIME: MONDAYS (12PM - 1PM)

COURSE DIRECTORS: Drew Maurer, Ph.D.
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SENIOR PH.D. STUDENT CONTRIBUTOR: Caesar Hernandez III

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES:

Becoming an independent researcher requires the ability to rapidly acquire and digest information- all the while remaining critical, or at least aware of the shortcomings. However, after years in a traditional classroom – memorizing and regurgitating information- opportunities to openly dissent are few and far between. This instigates a situation where students may be at risk of becoming followers of dogma, rather than formulating and following their own hypothesis. Therefore, the student will have the opportunity to select a topic in neuroscience and pick at the veneer, hopefully, either coming out with a reinforced position on the status quo or a novel, non-contemporary perspective. This course is designed to instigate debate and entertain controversial thoughts- all for the sake of challenging, collegial conversations. The ultimate goal is to prepare students to critically evaluate neuroscience research from the level of the fundamental premise to intellectual horizons.

COURSE TEXTBOOK:
No textbook is necessary although “Writing for Biomedical Publication” is highly encouraged (http://www.grantcentral.com/workbooks/biomedical-publication/)

PREREQUISITE KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS:
You are expected to be familiar with basic Neuroscience concepts before starting this course series. If you are uncertain about the sufficiency of your background, you are encouraged to read through chapters one through ten in Neuroscience Online – an electronic textbook (Open Access)
https://nba.uth.tmc.edu/neuroscience/m/index.htm

Furthermore, given the debate nature of this class, there is the requirement that you come with both an opinion and open mind.

COURSE SCHEDULE:
Disclaimer: The course syllabus will be determined on the first week or two (with students and topics selected for the rest of the semester). This syllabus will represent our current plans and objectives. As we go through the semester, those plans may need to change to enhance the class learning opportunity. Such changes, communicated clearly, are not unusual and should be expected.

GRADING POLICIES:

Standard Grades will be given for this course (A, B, C, D, and Fail). The grade will be assigned based on numerical performance on two presentations (one as primary and one as “red team”), the two complimentary “synthesis” papers, and peer review comments.

Primary Presenter: Student will be prepared to give a 15 minute (15 slide max) lecture on the topic, providing the status quo knowledge. Should they find resource material that may be beneficial for the class, they are encouraged to circulate before class. Should this be a court room, the primary would be the defense attorney.

- The Primary Presenter will be responsible for the 3-page synthesis chapter due the week they present.*

“Red Team”: Another student will be given the task of what amounts to “prosecutor”/ “red team” allowed to interject during the presentation to ask questions or criticisms. Should the issue should have enough momentum, the remainder of the class is welcomed to participate in the conversation (remember the purpose of the course is to generate debate). The “red team” is expected to have knowledge of the topic as well as a list of potential short-comings/issues. Failure to be aggressive in challenging the presentation will result in a heavy detraction to the final grade.

- The “Red Team” will be responsible for the 1-page dissenting opinion due the week of presentation.*

Given the nature of the course, attendance is mandatory as is class participation. The students not “on the hook” for presenting are heavily encouraged to step in and out of the debate as well as “stir the pot.”

Finally, students outside of the debate will review the written products of a topic. Reviewers will be selected to “proof” the assignments (offer comments, corrections, suggestions, and criticisms) and email corrections back to Dr. Maurer as well as the Primary Presenter and Red Team the following week. The Primary and Red Team will make corrections and submit the assignment. Grades will be determined based on nature of comments (for reviewers) and responsiveness to feedback (for Primary & Red Team).

*Should the Primary Presenter and “Red Team” wish, they will be able to work together for a single 5-page chapter, rather than writing two independent pieces.

Presentations (Primary and Red): 40%
Synthesis Chapters: 40%
Peer Review Comments: 10%
Participation: 10%

COURSE POLICIES:
ATTENDANCE POLICY: Attendance is mandatory

TOPIC CHOICE: The topic must be approved by Dr. Maurer. Examples are “The hippocampus support learning and memory,” “Models of working memory,” “Binding by EEG Oscillations,” “Reductionist Science,” “How Visual Perception Works” or even the utility of a methodological approach. Students, however, are encouraged to pick their own topic.

MAKE-UP POLICY: You are expected to notify the course directors of any anticipated absences. You should make every effort to take the exams on the days they are scheduled. If extenuating circumstances prevent you from turning in an assignment, you will need to schedule an appointment to meet with the course directors to identify an alternative course of action.

ASSIGNMENT POLICY: Group or individual projects must be completed and posted or turned in by the due date/time to obtain credit for the work.

ETIQUETTE: All members of the class are expected to follow rules of common courtesy!! This class is expected to generate debate and discussion, but it is also necessary that we keep a cordial atmosphere.

FREEDOM FOR DEBATE: Note well, that on occasion, Dr. Maurer will say something grossly disproportionate in order to stimulate conversation. Because the nature of this class is discussion oriented, it is necessary to assume that Dr. Maurer is solely taking the position of an antagonist and he reserves the right not to endorse any comment he makes. As such, ALL students are afforded the same privilege and are not anchored to any position, idea or comment that they communicate. Therefore, it is imperative that no one takes these interactions personally and, if offended, try to give the benefit of the doubt to the person who spoke the comment. As we are trying to hone techniques for interactions that occur in public scientific discourse, composure, and a thick-skin are talents worth acquiring. In particular, any person speaking in the classroom may only be playing devil’s advocate and should be afforded freedom of expression. Maintaining registration in this course beyond the standard “Add/Drop” deadline demonstrates that you understand and accept this policy.

UF POLICIES:

UNIVERSITY POLICY ON ACCOMMODATING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: Students requesting accommodation for disabilities must first register with the Dean of Students Office (http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/). The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting an accommodation. You must submit this documentation before submitting assignments or taking the quizzes or exams. Accommodations are not retroactive. Therefore, students should contact the office as soon as possible in the term for which they are seeking accommodations.

UNIVERSITY POLICY ON ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT: Academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Students should be sure that they understand the UF Student Honor Code at http://www.dso.ufl.edu/students.php