

# Department of Psychology

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## News

### TVO's Lecturer Competition

This year, the top ten finalists in [TVO's Best Lecturer competition](#), include two psychology professors from U of T Scarborough. Congratulations to Professor Gerald Cupchik and Professor Marc Fournier for making it this far in the competition. The public's vote will determine the winner, who will receive \$10,000 scholarship toward his/her university. Professor Fournier's televised lecture, titled "Dominance and Depression," is scheduled to air on TVO on March 15 and 16 at 4 p.m. Professor Cupchik's televised lecture, entitled "Two Faces of Emotion," is scheduled to be broadcast on TVO on March 29 and March 30 at 4 p.m.

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### Why are People Prejudice?

First-year psychology Master's student, Jennifer Gutsell, has received recognition for her research on prejudice in the Toronto Star on January 24th. Jennifer, who is doing research under the supervision of UTSC Professor Michael Inzlicht, draws together research methods from both social psychology and neuroscience in a unique approach to better understand why people are prejudice . [Read the Toronto Star article here.](#)

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### Meditation Changes Brain Function

Collaborative research between the Psychology Department and the [Centre for Addiction and Mental Health \(CAMH\)](#) reveals that meditation can alter brain activity. Norman Farb, a Psychology Ph.D. candidate, Professor Adam Anderson of Psychology, and Professor Zindel Segal of the Psychiatry Department, U of T, have used functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) to map out brain activity. For the first time, this technique has been used to shed light on the effects of "mindfulness meditation." The findings were published in the December 2007 issue of [Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience](#). [Read more about the article.](#)

[The article on "mindfulness meditation".](#)

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### Just Published

[Sex and the Brain](#), edited by Gillian Einstein, Psychology Department faculty member, has just been published by MIT press. This collection of carefully selected papers on sex differences in the brain looks at the growing scientific work in this emerging field, with Dr. Einstein's thoughtful introductions tying each of the papers together in a clear and knowledgeable way. Dr. Einstein is also faculty with the [Department of Public Health Sciences](#) at U of T, and the Director of the University's Program in Collaborative [Women's Health](#). Congratulations to Dr. Einstein!

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### Winner: Baldwin Prize for Best Essay

The Department of Psychology would like to congratulate Research Specialist student, Justin Ruppel. Justin is this year's winner of The [James Mark Baldwin](#) Prize for Best Essay on the Theoretical Foundations of Psychology. His award winning paper, "The importance of being earnest: An evaluation of adaptationist explanations for mental disorders", addressed the shortcomings of adaptationist explanations of mental disorder, and thus addressed core issues in psychiatry, evolutionary theory, and the nature of scientific explanation.

Each year, the Baldwin Prize recognizes exceptional essays written by Psychology Research Specialists that demonstrate mastery of foundational issues in psychology.

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### Winners: Dr. Freud Competition

Every year, the Psychology Students' Association hosts the Dr. Freud competition, a competition that is primarily intended for first year psychology students. Congratulations to Geordie Derraugh and Sarah Yeung (a.k.a. The Jung Offenders) for winning this year's 2007 Fall Dr.Freud Competition. A hearty thank you to Professor Urbszat for leading the competition, and to all the competitors and spectators who attended this event.

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### Teaching Excellence Honoured

On November 22<sup>nd</sup>, two Psychology faculty members were honoured with the province's inaugural [Leadership in Faculty Teaching \(LIFT\)](#) award at Massey College. Congratulations to both Professor **Kirk Blankstein**, [University of Toronto Mississauga](#), and Professor **Steve Joordens**, [University of Toronto Scarborough](#) for their achievement. [Read more..](#)

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### Self-Control Needs Moderation

A new research finding led by Michael Inzlicht, a faculty member at the [University of Toronto Scarborough](#), is published in the November issue of Psychological Science. In this study, Professor Inzlicht demonstrates that self-control is a limited resource that depletes quickly when one is faced with accomplishing multiple goals. His study suggests that single goal-driven tasks can be accomplished far better if attention is given to those tasks one at a time. Congratulations to Dr. Inzlicht! [Read full article here.](#)

More information: [Reuters Health](#); [Medical News Today](#); [Science Daily](#); [Calgary Herald](#)

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### Fergus Craik Receives Honorary Degree

Dr. Fergus Craik, scientist at the [Rotman Research Institute](#), received an honorary degree from the [University of Bordeaux 2](#), France, on September 22<sup>nd</sup>. This honorary degree was awarded by the University's medical and human sciences branch in recognition of Dr. Craik's research in the areas of memory and cognitive aging. Congratulations to Dr. Craik!

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### Slowing Down the Aging Brain

According to research findings, led by a team of scientists at the [Baycrest Research Centre](#), regular mental exercise can slow down the deterioration of the brain, due to aging, and improve cognitive skills. Research suggests that exercising our brain, just like exercising our body, will lead to healthier mental state.

More information: [MacLean's Magazine](#); [CTV News](#)

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### Action Video Games Improve Spatial Cognition

**Jing Feng**, a graduate student working under the supervision of **Dr. Ian Spence**, is the lead author, with Ian Spence and Jay Pratt, of an article on gender differences and video games, *Playing an Action Video Game Reduces Gender Differences in Spatial Cognition*, published in the October 2007 issue of [Psychological Science](#).

Jing's research revealed a previously unknown difference between men and women in completing certain tasks requiring higher spatial skills. It went on to demonstrate that this gender difference could be eliminated through the playing of action video games. The research suggests that playing action video games could be used to improve spatial skills essential for activities such as map reading, driving, assembling a barbeque, or learning advanced math. Furthermore, implications from this study include the possibility of increased representation of women in the mathematical and engineering fields, where superior spatial skills are critical.

More information: [The Economist](#); [Science Daily](#); [Toronto Star](#); [University of Toronto Bulletin](#)

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### Canada's First Green Radio News Show

An environmental radio news program produced by Ph.D. Psychology student **Jordan Poppenk**, "The Green Majority", was recognized in the [Fall 2007 issue of University of Toronto Magazine](#) as a leading "New and Notable" feature of UoT living. The program has aired on CIUT 89.5 FM every Friday at 10am for over a year, and is now rebroadcast in Alberta on CFPE 101.1 FM. It fills a void in Canada, being the first and only news program in the country to concentrate upon Canadian environmental stories. Back episodes feature a variety of noteworthy Canadian voices in the realm that melds ecology with science, engineering, arts, and theology, and can be downloaded from the [program's website](#).

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### Morris Moscovitch Receives William James Fellow Award

Morris Moscovitch, Professor Emeritus and Scientist at the [Rotman Research Institute](#), is a recipient of the 2007-2008 [APS William James Fellow Award](#). The [Association for Psychological Science](#) (APS) is a leading international organization dedicated to the advancement of scientific psychology, and it has recognized Dr. Moscovitch for his lifetime contribution to this field of study. More specifically, Dr. Moscovitch is best known for his contributions to the area of memory. Congratulations to Dr. Moscovitch! [Read more..](#)

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### Canadian Medical Hall of Fame Honours Endel Tulving

On October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2007, Professor Emeritus, Endel Tulving, was honoured by the [Canadian Medical Hall of Fame](#) (CMHF) for his contributions to the understanding of disease and the improvement of health and well-being. The induction into the CMHF, a non-profit organization, is a unique award dedicated to recognizing the accomplishments of Canada's healthcare heroes. We congratulate Dr. Tulving on this honour. [Read more..](#)

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### Jason Plaks' Article Published in the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology

The Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, an [American Psychological Association](#) journal, published Jason Plaks' article, "Unexpected improvement, decline, and stasis: A prediction confidence perspective on achievement success and failure" in the October 2007 issue. Professor Plaks is a full-time faculty at the University of Toronto's St. George Campus. In this article, Dr. Plaks and his co-author, Kristin Stecher, investigate the relationship between theories of intelligence and reactions to performance feedback. Congratulations Dr. Plaks! [Read more..](#) or [Read full article here.](#)

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#### New Strain of Mice

Ashley Monks, a researcher at the [University of Toronto Mississauga](#), has developed a new strain of mice, with specific defects in muscle cells, symptoms similar to [Kennedy Disease](#), which will aid researchers better investigate the causes of this illness. Kennedy Disease is a neuromuscular illness that is inherited and affects only men. [Read more..](#)

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#### Psychology graduate students win prestigious awards

Two psychology students, at the [University of Toronto Scarborough](#) have received prestigious awards from the [American Psychological Association](#). Michelle Hilscher, a recent Ph.D. student, received the Frank X. Barron Award, for great achievements in the fields of the psychology of esthetics, creativity and the arts. Igor Juricevis' won the Berlyne Award, given to an individual who demonstrates superior quality in doctoral work or post-doctoral work, within 10 years of receiving a PhD. Congratulations to both Michelle and Igor! [Read more..](#)

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