COGS171GS: Mirror Neuron System and Social Cognition
MTuWTH 9:00 am-1:00 pm
Summer 2016 Parma, Italy

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Office Hours: TBD

This class will examine the neuroanatomy, physiology, and functional correlates of the human mirror neuron system and its putative role in social cognition, e.g., action understanding, empathy, and theory of mind. We will examine the developmental, neuroimaging, electrophysiological, as well as clinical evidence for and against this hypothesis.

All students will:
1. Write two critical reviews or “thought” essays every week based on the required readings that week. Each essay is one page maximum. See class website (or ask instructor) for a sample of a critical review. Essays are due on Monday of the assigned week - for a total of 8 essays (50%). No essays due on Week 5.
2. Work in groups of 2-3 to do a research proposal. This will be 8-10 pages for an experiment that addresses an issue relevant to mirroring and social cognition. Proposal is due at the end of the class (no later than Thursday of Week 5). See class website for instructions on structure of proposal. (25%)
3. Take the final (25%).

- Class website is on TED. PDF versions of each of the assigned articles will be on the class website for students to download.

Week 1 6/29-7/2 THE ONTOGENY AND PHYLOGENY OF MIRROR NEURONS
Lyons, D. E. The rational continuum of human imitation

Week 2 7/6-7/9 UNIFYING SOCIAL COGNITION; IS MIRRORING THE SAME AS SIMULATION?
Hurley, S. Chapter 7: The Shared Circuits Hypothesis in Perspectives on Imitation, from Neuroscience to Social Science: Vol 1. Mechanisms of Imitation and Imitation in Animals


Week 3  7/13-7/16  MIRROR NEURONS AND THE MENTAL STATES OF OTHERS? MIRRORING FOR SOUNDS


Week 4  7/20-7/23  IS EMPATHY A FUNCTION OF MIRRORING? EMOTIONS, MIRRORING AND THE AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE


Week 5  7/27-7/30  DISORDERS OF MIRRORING; QUESTIONS AND ALTERNATIVE VIEWS


FINAL on 7/29 in class