

HGS U3A & Middlesex University Psychology Programme 2019

Professor Antonia Bifulco, Head of Department Psychology

Sessions 1- 1.5 hours held in the Lecture Room, Model Farmhouse Barn 2 at Middlesex University.

Monday 4-5.30 (The Burroughs, Hendon NW4 4BT)

29th April -Dr Fabia Franco & Dr Anthony Mangiacotti – *Music, emotion regulation & cognition*

Traditionally, music has been mostly seen as part of the arts and entertainment world. Although some were still referring to music as “auditory cheesecake” (Pinker, 1997), in the last twenty years or so research has elucidated a quite different picture, showing how music is simply a fundamental part of the human communication toolkit, with deep connections to language. Evidence from evolutionary, anthropological, psychological and neuroscientific studies has begun to uncover fundamental functions of music in communication, emotion regulation and cognitive function.

Can music make you smarter? Is learning a second (or even the first) language facilitated by music? Are lullabies only for babies, or do we all regulate our emotions with music? Are aspects of music universal? In this lecture we will explore these questions through the lifespan and illustrate some of the research at the Music Cognition & Communication Lab at Middlesex. Depending from audience’s response, we will also demonstrate a novel cognitive test based on musical tasks.

To find out more about Fabia:

<https://www.mdx.ac.uk/about-us/our-people/staff-directory/profile/franco-fabia>

Anthony is a researcher and PhD student from Padua university, at Middlesex since 2017.

<https://unihub.mdx.ac.uk/student-life/news/2018/mdx-academics-lead-groundbreaking-research-participants-needed/>

13 May 2019 -Prof Tom Dickins - *Life history theory: calibrating to ecological circumstance*

In this lecture I will introduce life history theory (LHT). LHT captures key developmental decisions for organisms across the entire lifespan. These are decisions about resource allocation to growth and reproduction and lead to various trade-offs driven by ecological circumstances. Broadly speaking we can define species in terms of average life history strategy but we also know that there is much within species variation. I will discuss this approach in the context of my own work on avian models and humans and I will also look at some of the mechanisms that deliver these trade-offs.

More about Tom

<https://www.mdx.ac.uk/about-us/our-people/staff-directory/profile/dickins-tom>

<http://dissentwithmodification.com/>

20th May - Dr Andrea Oskis – *Relationships across the lifespan: connection, disconnection and stress*

Why do our relationships and our social connections mean so much to us? Why do they provide us with some of the most joyous, and sometimes the most painful, experiences we have as humans? Scientific evidence suggests that high-quality, close relationships are just as important for our health and well-being as having a good diet or taking regular exercise. In this talk I will present work showing how our experiences of relationships link to our body’s stress hormones, and the implications this has for our health and well-being.

More about Andrea:

<https://www.mdx.ac.uk/about-us/our-people/staff-directory/profile/oskis-andrea>

3rd June - Dr David Westley Building Bounce-Back-Ability: The Psychology of Wellbeing & Resilience

Bounce-back-ability, or resilience, is the capacity to adapt to challenges and setbacks in life. In this workshop we will review key findings from the psychological science relating to maintaining wellbeing and building resilience. The workshop will also provide practical, evidence-based advice to participants on ways to build their own resilience and even gain strength from adversity.

More about David:

<https://www.mdx.ac.uk/about-us/our-people/staff-directory/profile/westley-david>

10th June Dr Mark Coulson - *Mindfulness and the ancient art of letting things be the way they are*

Many psychological approaches to wellbeing focus on changing thoughts and behaviours, but the modern adaptation of mindfulness practice suggests that an alternative exists – just letting things be as they are, and experiencing them for what they are rather than how we would like them to be. This workshop will introduce some of the basic principles behind mindfulness, and provide short guided meditations which cover the breadth of the techniques used in mindfulness courses.

More about Mark:

<https://www.mdx.ac.uk/about-us/our-people/staff-directory/profile/coulson-mark>

17th June - Dr Rhonda Cohen/ Dr Anne Elliot – *Physical activity as we get older – benefits and barriers*

By understanding the natural physical and cognitive decline of the body and physicality as we age, it is possible to identify strategies and interventions to both manage physical downturn and even improve conditions. Correct use of exercise and psychological techniques can actually roll back the years and take certain conditions such as diabetes out of clinical concern and back into a normal sphere. We will explore our own triggers and barriers to exercise adherence in order to facilitate and active future.

More about Rhonda:

<https://www.mdx.ac.uk/about-us/our-people/staff-directory/profile/cohen-rhonda>

More about Anne:

<https://www.mdx.ac.uk/about-us/our-people/staff-directory/profile/elliott-anne>

24th June - Dr Emma V. Ward - *Memory Matters: Preservation and enhancement over the lifespan*

Memory is a fundamental and complex cognitive process. There are various ways in which memory can manifest itself, from remembering what we did on our last birthday, to remembering how to play a musical instrument, and even the feeling of déjà vu. Decades of research suggests that natural age-related changes in the brain and mental processing are linked to a progressive decline in memory. However, not all forms of memory decline over the course of the lifespan. Some forms of memory remain remarkably stable or sometimes get better as we grow older. Even individuals with severe memory impairment, such as amnesia, can demonstrate normal function in some aspects of memory. This talk will provide an overview of some of the main types of memory and how scientists examine them in the laboratory. We will discuss how these different types of memory are affected by the natural ageing process, and explore factors that are believed to preserve or even enhance memory with age, such as attention, mood, rhythm and music. The talk will be approximately one hour and suitable for a non-specialist audience. There will be an opportunity to ask questions at the end of the session.

More about Emma:

<https://www.mdx.ac.uk/about-us/our-people/staff-directory/profile/ward-emma>