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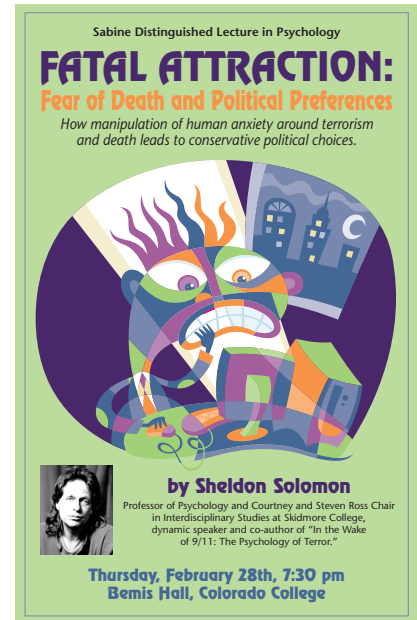
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Sabine Distinguished Lecture: "Fatal Attraction: Fear of Death and Political Preferences"

The 2008 Sabine Distinguished Lecture was given by Sheldon Solomon, Courtney and Steven Ross Chair of Interdisciplinary Studies at Skidmore College (a small school much like ours, he pointed out). Dr. Solomon is one of the brilliant minds that developed the Terror Management Theory. According to this theory, humans understand that their death is inevitable and therefore could potentially experience a paralyzing existential anxiety. However, this terror is usually allayed (and managed) by personally and collectively constructed cultural worldviews that provide meaning, and literal or symbolic immortality.

How might this theory be relevant to our political decision making? According to Solomon, in the period after the 9/11 attack, President George W. Bush was often presented as a "protective shield against death, armed with high-tech weaponry, patriotic rhetoric, and the resolute invocation of doing God's will to 'rid the world of evil.'" This image made him highly appealing as a leader who could successfully and unconsciously allay people's death anxiety.

Solomon presented multiple studies that supported this hypothesis. In a study done shortly after 9/11, individuals who were reminded of death, compared to those not reminded of death (but reminded of other unpleasant experiences) reported increased support for Bush and his policies pertaining to Iraq. During the 2004 Bush-Kerry presidential election, people showed an increased preference for Bush over Kerry, even among political liberals, if they had been subtly



reminded of death. In Solomon's words, "These findings may not bode well for the philosophical democratic ideal that political preferences are the result of rational choice based on an informed understanding of the relevant issues."

If you are interested in learning more about this research, you may want to read:

Landau, MJ, Solomon S, Greenberg J, et al. (2004). Deliver us from evil: The effects of mortality salience and reminders of 9/11 on support for president George W Bush. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 30, 1136-1150

Lee Eakin contributed to this report.



2008 Distinguished Alumni Lecture: Melissa Bauman

Melissa (Prather) Bauman '98 delivered the 2008 Sabine Endowed Alumnus Lecture, titled "Nonhuman Primate Models of Autism," at the Block 7 Psychology Society meeting. Her research has revealed a potential role of fetal exposure to certain maternal antibodies in the development of behaviors associated with autism spectrum disorders. Bauman received her Ph.D. in Neuroscience from the University of California Davis and is currently an Assistant Adjunct Professor at the UC Davis M.I.N.D. Institute.

FACULTY RESEARCH: FLAME RETARDANTS AND TOXICITY



Lori Driscoll is assistant professor of psychology at CC, where she specializes in behavioral pharmacology and toxicology. She graduated from CC in 1994 and received her PhD from Cornell University in 2003.

Many of the chemicals that humans have designed to reduce product flammability are similar in structure to important substances in our bodies, which means that they are also potentially toxic. Polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDEs) are flame retardants that are heavily utilized in plastics and polyurethane foam in the United States. They are readily released into the environment, where they are breathed in and swallowed by humans and other animals. Infants receive particularly high doses of PBDEs in breast milk. Recent studies estimate that human PBDE levels are between 10 and 100 times higher in the US than they are in Europe, where these chemicals have been banned.

Where are they now?

Jerry Northern (Psychology '62) retired from a career as a Professor at the University of Colorado School of Medicine in 1996. He is stepping down this year from a 15-year position as Editor-in-Chief of *Audiology Today*. He is also finishing a ten-year stint as editor of the Academy's website, www.audiology.org. Currently he is busy in his consulting activities with hearing technology manufacturers, and updating the 6th edition of his textbook *Hearing in Children*.



Jerry Northern, shown with Carl Roberts, was the recipient of the Colorado College Louis T. Benezet Distinguished Career Award in 1992.

Jean Halley Maxfield (Psychology '89) is an assistant professor of sociology at Wagner College in New York City. She lives in Manhattan with her two children and partner.

Dan Laukitis (Psychology '90) received his PhD in Clinical Psychology from Columbia University. He is in private practice in downtown Manhattan and is Adjunct Faculty at Columbia University. He volunteers as the mental game coach for the mens and womens CU golf teams.

Driscoll and her students are investigating the effects of early postnatal PBDE exposure on the development of learning, attention, and the cholinergic neurotransmitter system in rats. PBDEs are similar to thyroid hormones and can produce hypothyroidism. Thyroid hormones play an important role in brain development, so their disruption by PBDEs could result in lasting cognitive impairments. Research in Driscoll's lab has revealed that rats exposed to PBDEs through their mothers' milk show learning impairments and alterations in cholinergic functioning. If the exposure is extended into adulthood, attention is also impaired. This research was some of the first in the United States to demonstrate that PBDE exposure results in lasting neurobehavioral impairments. Future research will be aimed at reversing these impairments with thyroid hormone supplementation.

2007-08 Student Awards

Cornelia Manley Sabine Award
Jill Bennett '08, Jessica Bolen '08

William Arthur Blakely Memorial Award
Kelsey Patterson '09

Cornelia Manley Sabine Scholarship
Briana Cushing '09

Mike Baca (Psychology '95) is a postdoctoral researcher in Dr. Jack Feldman's Systems Neurobiology Laboratory at the University of California, Los Angeles. He is interested in the general problem of how neurons communicate with one another to drive behaviors, specifically using electrophysiological, optical, and whole animal physiological techniques to try to understand how neurons in the brainstem interact to produce and modulate the breathing rhythm.

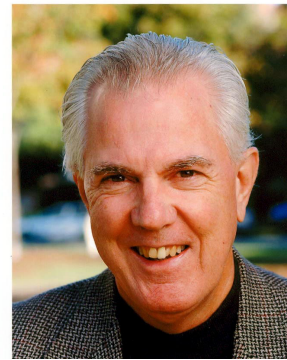
Heather Goldman Brey (Psychology '98) completed a Masters in Early Childhood Special Education in 2002. She works as a Behavior and Developmental Specialist, supporting families and their children from birth until Kindergarten age. Her work focuses on children with challenging behavior and children from Spanish-speaking families. She lives in Eugene, Oregon with her husband, Ryan, and their 1-year-old son, Sylvan.

Mary Voebel (Psychology '03) taught English in Buenos Aires and was involved in educational programs in the US, Argentina, and Chile after graduation. She will be attending Harvard this fall in the masters in Human Development and Psychology program. She still holds the CC women's all-time record for most assists in basketball.

ALUMNI VOICES: BILL YOST '66

As I am writing this piece I am remembering (vaguely) my last year at CC ready to head to graduate school. I can still feel the excitement and fear that I had then for what lay ahead. But, I was brimming with confidence based on the incredible education I had at CC and the beginning of life-long friendships with the psychology faculty. My confidence was well founded in that CC did prepare me well for graduate school and for life in general (although I wish CC had taught me how to correct a slice). From all I know about CC today and its outstanding psychology department, the graduates are still well prepared for what they will encounter. The nice thing about a psychology degree, one can wind up in a variety of jobs. I started and it looks I will be ending my academic career in a speech and hearing science rather than a psychology department. So for you graduates keep an open mind, you never know where you might find yourself. But wherever it is, I bet that your CC experiences will allow you to be successful. If you are ever at ASU, look me up.

Bill Yost ('66, wife Lee '66, and daughter Kelley '93)



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STUDENT RESEARCH: 12 STUDENTS PRESENTED AT CONFERENCES

This year the Cornelia M. Sabine Fund and the College's Venture Grant program jointly supported 12 students to present at local, regional, and national conferences. Representing CC at the Society for Neuroscience conference were Brian Bones '09 and Brooks Robinson '09, presenting a research genealogy for Dr. A Scheibel, and Jesse Fitzpatrick '08, Josh Kaplan '08, and Josh Kraut '08, presenting their thesis research on the effects of postnatal PBDE (flame retardant) exposure in rat cognition and behavior. San Tung '08 co-authored a poster on the effect of violating perceptual expectations on frustration for the American Psychological Society meeting. Christy Sweaney '08 won a Psi Chi award for her research on aging and affective forecasting at the Rocky Mountain Psychology Association Conference. Also at RMPA, Kierin Amundson '08 and Jill Bennett '08 delivered an oral paper on gender bias in elementary school science textbooks. We also had seven students present at the Colorado Springs Undergraduate Research Forum (Kierin Amundson, Vanessa Baltazar, Jessica Bolen, Brian Bones, Lee Eakin, Jenny Mendoza, and Lizzy Weiss).



CC presenters at the Society for Neuroscience Conference: (from left) Josh Kraut '08, Josh Kaplan '08, Lori Driscoll, Bob Jacobs, John Britt '02. Jesse Fitzpatrick '08 is in front of Lori, but partially concealed by the poster tag.

We want your stories

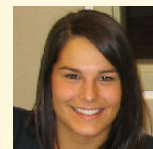
Be featured in the next issue of our newsletter. We want to know how you are doing. Send us a one- or two-sentence description of "where you are now;" please include your full name and graduation year. We are also seeking submission for the "Alumni Voices" if you have advice or experience to share.

Send your submissions to psychology@coloradocollege.edu.

From Jill Bennett on her first conference experience:

I presented my thesis on stereotype threat and poverty at a poster session at the Society for Personality and Social Psychology conference. My experiments showed that stereotype threat (e.g., cues that remind people of the stereotype that "poor people are not knowledgeable about money matters") led to lowered performance on a financial literacy test. In addition, the effect was stronger for people who are highly identified with their socioeconomic status.

With over 3,000 people at the conference, it was initially overwhelming, especially when I was at my poster waiting for questions. However, I ended up having wonderful conversations with graduate students and faculty, and it turned out to be an invaluable learning experience.



DEPARTMENT NEWS: THIS IS HOW WE LOOK NOW



A number of our readers mentioned that they would like to see what we look like now, so here it is! (from top left: Tomi-Ann Roberts, Kristi Erdal, Emily Chan; bottom row: Tricia Waters, Bob Jacobs, Lori Driscoll, Kevin Ford, and John Horner)

MYSTERY PHOTO CONTEST



CC Special Collections

Do you know what is going on in this photo? What are they studying? Who is the “experimental subject?” What is the menacing-looking stick that is held over the subject’s “cage?”

Contests: You can either (1) send us the real answer, or (2) invent a creative and humorous caption.

Send all responses to psychology@coloradocollege.edu

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