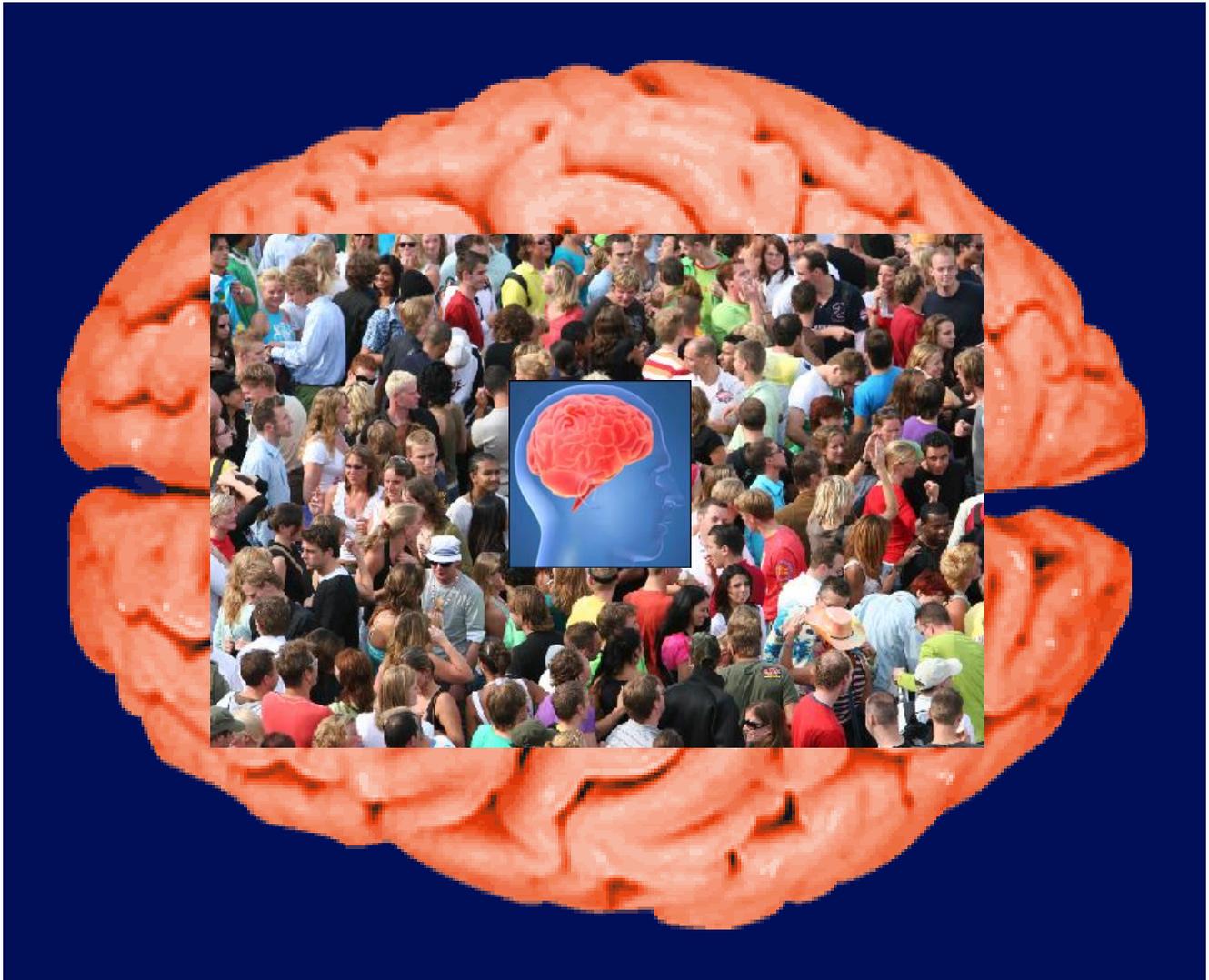


The human brain has evolved to be part of human society.

See how your brain is “wired for society”!

Enroll in MCB 170: Society and the Brain



big brain from morphonics; society from heathhelen; little brain from sciseek

The goal of this course, taught by Associate Professor Thomas J. Anastasio, is to introduce students to a broad range of neurobiological facts and place them in the exciting context of brain-society interactions. Along the way, students will see that they are, literally, by the biology of their own brains, part of something larger than themselves.

MCB 170: Society and the Brain

Fulfills GedEd requirement. Offered every fall semester.

Topics by week

1. Wired for Society
The human brain has evolved to participate in social interactions.
2. Its Nice to be Nice
Evolution may have changed our brain chemistry to make us more social.
3. In Praise of Aggression
Aggressiveness on the part of some individuals may benefit the whole group.
4. Depression is Depressing
Social interactions are the primary determinant of mood in normal humans.
5. Roses, Lollipops, and Oxytocin
Certain neurohormones and brain regions mediate bonding between humans.
6. Social Control of Sexuality
Sexual orientation may be partly determined by brain-society interactions.
7. Experience Dependent Development
Social environment affects brain development as much as physical environment.
8. Neural Correlates of Group Affiliation
Social influence on frontal cortex activity can reduce inter-group prejudice.
9. Fairness and Cooperation
Many brain regions are active during economic decisions and exchanges.
10. The Power of Prayer
Prayer can increase social capital, which in turn can actually improve our health.
11. God and the Brain
Many brain regions are associated with religious behavior and thoughts of God.
12. The Aging Brain
Social interaction can benefit the aging brain both physiologically and psychologically.
13. Individual and Collective Memory
Memory may be similar in collectives as in individuals, but collectives can endure.
14. Happiness and the Brain
Investing in social capital can pay you back a dividend of happiness.

Course materials

All class notes will be available online. All quizzes will be administered online. An article from the literature that relates to the lecture topic will be available each week via download.

Contact hours

Two lecture hours will be offered each week. The third hour is reserved for the weekly quiz and an online student blog session. The instructor will also be available for a regular, weekly office hour.

Expected Work, Examinations, and Grading

Students are expected to attend lectures, study their class notes, and read the assigned readings. Students will be given a 30 minute examination each week for fourteen weeks. The last exam is the final but it is also a 30 minute exam. All exams including the final are worth 10%. Grades will be based on the best out of ten of the exam scores. Students are not required to take more than ten exams. Students can skip up to four exams with no penalty, but make-ups will not be offered.