COGSCI MONTHLY

September '26

Events of the Month

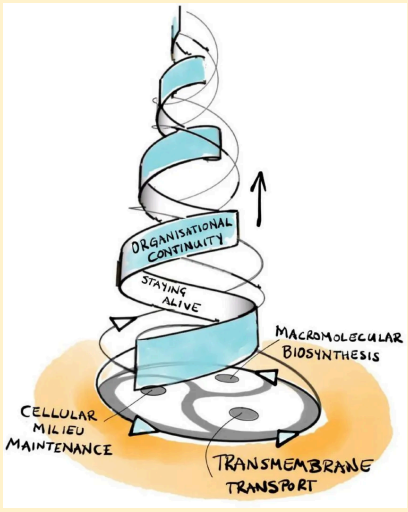
- Sep 23, 2026 1:00 PM in the UC Quad
- Sep 25, 2026 6:00 PM : - Movie Night in BA2175

Opportunities

Are you interested in studying political parasocial relationships, or political bias in LLMs? Contact alvina.lai@mail.utoronto.ca if you want to apply to be a volunteer RA.

Related Events

- Sep 14, 2026 - Sep 18, 2026 : - Fields CNAM Nonlinear Days, a series of talks on Dynamical Systems
- Sep 25, 2026 3:00 PM :- "Bringing Quine and Lewis Back Together," a talk by philosopher Barry Loewer



Pop quiz: name the paper!

Conference Posting

1. CLUFTCON
    a. 📍Bahen Centre
    b. September 24th, 2026
2. Marginalia Conference
    a. 📍Boston College
    b. 🗓️ October 20th, 2026

Letter from the Editor

Welcome, cognitive science students, to your inaugural newsletter. Here at CASA, we're looking forward to an exciting month

ahead with events such as our annual prof social, movie night, and more. We know that the start of the school year can be equal parts exciting and daunting, so be sure to follow us **@casa.uoft** on Instagram, or stop by our office (**F301**) in UC for some extra resources to help with your cog-related coursework (our office hour schedule is coming soon). In the coming months, we'll announce our first Re:COG speaker among other engagements, so remember to check your inbox for next month's newsletter. Best of luck with the start of school!

\- *Katie (CASA Lit & Editorial)*

The Topical

Welcome to the Topical: a section of the newsletter dedicated to a summary, an excerpt, or a train of thought related to cognitive science. For the September topical, what better question to answer, than a vague yet honest:

What is cognitive science?

Luckily, the resourceful bunch at the CASA office managed to hunt down some answers, in the form of an alternative-yet-essential-yet-incredible-yet-simple-yet-somewhatlargebutnotoverwhelming-yet-concise-yet-clean reading list for the new semester, full of classics from professors around campus. Let's begin!

Q: What is cognitive science?

A: Whoa whoa whoa there, pal! You think a topical could cover such a broad, overarching and interdisciplinary question? At CASA we do our best. But it's probably done slightly best(-er) by **Can Mekik**, a UofT Computational Cognitive Scientist.

In this paper, he goes over the character of cognitive science in an easily digestible format.

Q: I feel like you didn't even try answering my question?

A: That's an interesting idea there! Sometimes questions can feel unanswered, and these feelings can really leave us feeling mustered up inside, but you know what else could leave you mustered up! Qualia!

Is what I would typically say, if our program's one and only UofT cognitive scientist and philosopher, **James John** didn't educate me on the nuances and theory involved with the phenomena of qualia!

Q: Is there even a question you're trying to answer?

A: Great question! Living in the cognitive wild west has left our feeble and lousily wired cognition in wrecks! Luckily, despite our lack of memetic defense, there's a faint light to be found in such dire times! One could even say... a whisper of wisdom? For example, UofT Cognitive Scientist and Psychologist **John Vervaeke** investigates questions of meaning, and the science of wisdom, which finds itself interwoven with theories of what it means to be a conscious agent!

Q: Are you even real, dude?

A: What a curious insight! Yes, during these moments of AI use, and a flourishing of cognitive apparitions which float around our minds (and seem to float through into our screens!), it's doubtful to believe that any of us, even you reader, are anything but piles of code, waiting to be looped, over and over and over again.

But fear not! For our lovely UofT Cognitive Scientist and Philosopher **Alex Djedovic** has a wonderful paper on agency and cognition, and their fundamental incompatibility! A saving grace!

Q:

A: ABSOLUTELY! Of course I could list out a small compiled list of professors that involve themselves with the Cognitive Science Program at University of Toronto, alongside an attached link to a paper of high interest! I genuinely thought you would have never asked.

Sara Aronowitz studies theory of mind, with focus into the conception of memory, belief and thought as a structure. In this paper, the distinction between episodic and semantic memory is challenged.

Yang Xu, our program's current acting director, studies computational linguistics and hones in on curious patterns within them: such as the evolution of word meanings through metaphorical mapping.

Mark Miller, known extensively for his COG250 class, studies a predictive processing framework of the mind, bringing a functional model which finds itself useful in explaining the playful and predictive mind.

In summary, this is not an exhaustive list of the professors within the cognitive science department, nor a quality representation of their honest work. In further summary, there's much more quality conceptions, ideas and frameworks to be found amongst the breadth of cognitive science academics, here at UofT. Aside from this CASA September Topical, please take a look for yourself, and enjoy the insights you may find along the way.

- *Andrew (CASA Lit & Editorial)*

See you next month!

- *CASA Team*

