Neurobiology HMS230
Harvard / GSAS 78454
Visual object recognition:
From computational and biophysical algorithms to cognition

FALL 2011

Overview

Visual recognition is essential for most everyday tasks including navigation, reading and socialization. Visual pattern recognition is also important for many engineering applications such as automatic analysis of clinical images, face recognition by computers, security tasks and automatic navigation. In spite of the enormous increase in computational power over the last decade, humans still outperform the most sophisticated engineering algorithms in visual recognition tasks. In this course, we will examine how circuits of neurons in visual cortex represent and transform visual information. The course will cover the following topics: functional architecture of visual cortex, lesion studies, physiological experiments in humans and animals, visual consciousness, computational models of visual object recognition, computer vision algorithms.

Class web site

http://klab.tch.harvard.edu/academia/classes/hms_neuro300_vision/index.html
(can be accessed through: http://tinyurl.com/vision-class)
Lecture notes, slides, reading assignments and other information will be posted in the class web site.

Location: Biolabs 1085

Course Meeting Times and Schedule

Mondays 3:30 pm to 5:30 pm
Lectures: 60 minutes / week.
Reading assignment discussion: 60 minutes/week

Faculty: Gabriel Kreiman

Contact information:

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Prerequisites:

Life Sciences 1a (or Life and Physical Sciences A) and Life Sciences 1b. [or equivalent]
Recommended: Math (Maa/Mab, Math1A,1B, Math19a or equivalent). Physical Sciences 1. MCB80.

Topics:

- Introduction to pattern recognition. Why is vision difficult? Overview of key questions in the field.
- Characterization of the visual input. Natural image statistics.
- The retina, LGN and primary visual cortex. Neurophysiology and neuroanatomy.
- Lesion studies in humans and animals.
- Adventures into terra incognita: Neurophysiology beyond primary visual cortex.
- Electrical stimulation in visual cortex and causality.
- Biophysically-inspired computational models of visual object recognition.
- Computer vision. Engineering algorithms and their applications. Machine learning applications to vision.
- Human perception. Psychophysics .Visual Illusions.
- Engineering and prosthetic devices for visual recognition
- Towards understanding subjective visual perception.

Suggested Books

Ullman S (1996) High-level vision. MIT Press.
Wandell BA (1995) Foundations of vision. Sunderland Sinauer Associates.
Chalupa LM and Werner JS (editors) (2003). The Visual Neurosciences. MIT Press.
Ripley. Pattern recognition and neural networks (1996). Cambridge University Press.
Rao, Olshausen and Lewicki (eds) (2002). Probabilistic models of the brain. MIT Press.
Koch C (2005) The quest for consciousness. Roberts & Company Publishers.
Deco, G. and E.T. Rolls, Computational Neuroscience of Vision, Oxford Oxford University Press.
Dayan and Abbott (2002). Theoretical Neuroscience. MIT Press.
Horn BKP. Robot Vision. MIT Press.
Kriegeskorte N and Kreiman G. (2011) Understanding visual population codes. MIT Press.
Davies ER. (2005). Machine Vision, Third Edition: Theory, Algorithms, Practicalities (Signal Processing and its Applications). Elsevier.

Homework, Reading assignments and writing requirements

Each week, students have to read, understand and discuss a scientific paper. The paper relates to the topics covered in the previous class and illustrates state-of-the-art research efforts in the field.
Students are required to hand in a discussion of the reading assignment including one of the following (typically half a page to one page):

1) A critic of the paper including missing controls or alternative interpretation of the findings or a critical discussion of the findings
2) Two follow up questions (computational modeling or experiments or computer vision applications)

Do not copy and paste from the paper (the instructor has already read the papers…). Homework is due (electronic format) before the beginning of each class.

Final paper. A final paper is due at the end of the class (details to be provided in

class)

Grading

Final grades are computed as follows:

Homework	– 60%
Class discussion	– 20%
Final paper	– 20%

Schedule

CLASS	Date	Title	Comment
1	09/05/12	Introduction to visual pattern recognition. Why is vision difficult?	**Note: Special Wednesday Class**
2	09/10/12	Natural image statistics and the retina.	
3	09/17/12	Primary visual cortex	
4	09/24/12	Lesions and neurological examination of extrastriate visual cortex	HW1 due
5	10/01/12	Adventures into terra incognita: probing the neurophysiological responses along the ventral visual stream	HW2 due
6	10/15/12	Psychophysical studies of visual object recognition	HW3 due 10/10 **Note: HW due via e-mail on 10/10**
7	10/22/12	First steps into inferior temporal cortex	HW4 due
8	10/29/12	From the highest echelons of visual processing to cognition	HW5 due
9	11/05/12	From correlation to causation: electrical stimulation of visual cortex	HW6 due
10	11/12/12	First steps towards in silico vision	HW7 due
11	11/19/12	Computational models of the ventral visual stream	HW8 due
12	11/26/12	Computer vision	HW9 due
13	12/03/12	Neural correlates of visual consciousness	HW10 due 12/10 **Note: HW due via e-mail on 12/10**
	12/14/2012	Final paper due	