9.04: Neural Basis of Vision and Audition

**Term Evaluated:** Fall 2010  
**Response Rate:** 7 responses out of 19 students

**Recommended Pre-requisites:** Most responded that 9.01 should be a pre- or co-requisite; one person recommended a general knowledge of neuroanatomy

**Motivation for taking the course:** Some looking for a neuroscience elective and most were specifically interested in vision or audition

Overall, people seemed to prefer the audition section (the second half of the course) to the vision section (the first half) because Professor Brown treated the material less as a collection of facts and illustrated its relationship to his research well. Students were generally frustrated with having so few assignments – two papers and two exams – and felt that expectations weren’t always clear. Someone also mentioned that they were frustrated that the class got out late consistently.

While having few graded assignments made the weekly work light, students generally found it more difficult to do well for the same reason. Some complained about subjective grading criteria on essays and arbitrary exam questions, however, students were split as to whether grading overall was lenient or strict.

**Best things about the course:**
- Chris Brown – from his teaching to his lab tour to his mustache
- Workload was fairly light
- Came out with a good understanding of the subject matter

**Worst things about the course:**
- Exams – particularly the midterm – didn’t test knowledge well
- Students didn’t feel well-informed about what might be on the exams or about the topics of the papers
The Readings: Students were split about the importance of the readings; about half did not do them and among those that did, about half said they were important, particularly for the audition part of the class, while the others said they were good for your own interest, but weren’t necessary.

Most people said that Prof. Schiller was extremely knowledgeable, but that he went through material fast and wasn’t the most engaging lecturer. One student mentioned that his lecture slides were particularly helpful, though.

The respondents were generally enthusiastic about Prof. Brown’s teaching style. One student said, “his excitement by the topic is obvious and contagious”. Some felt he went too slowly, but others thought he moved at a good pace.

What future students should know about this course:
- Memorization is key, so if you don’t like it, you might want to reconsider taking this class
- Prepare to meet with professors to discuss the papers before you write them to understand the expectations clearly
- It’s definitely more of a neuroscience-based class than cognitive science
- Be prepared to take (or borrow) really thorough notes in preparation for specific test questions later