

Prepared by the  
Neuroethics research unit  
at the IRCM

Préparé par l'unité de  
recherche en neuroéthique  
de l'IRCM

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# BRAINSTORM

A newsletter about ethics, neuroscience, and society  
Un bulletin sur l'éthique, les neurosciences et la société

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## Profile | Profil

**Cordella Fine** is a senior research fellow at the Melbourne School of Psychological Sciences and an Associate Professor with the Melbourne Business School and Centre for Ethical Leadership, University of Melbourne. She studied Experimental Psychology at Oxford University, then undertook a Masters in Criminology at Cambridge University before going on to complete a PhD at the Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience at University College London. Cordelia then held research positions at Monash University, the Australian National University and with the Centre for Agency, Values & Ethics at Macquarie University.



Fine developed an interest in neuroethics after reading a popular science book promising to explain the implications of 'hardwired' differences boys' and girls' brains for parents and teachers. She coined the term 'popular neurosexism' (in the inaugural issue of the journal *Neuroethics*) to describe how popular writers misrepre-

sent findings from neuroimaging studies to shore up gender stereotypes with a veneer of scientific authority, a theme she elaborated in a popular book *Delusions of gender: How our minds, society, and neurosexism create difference* (Norton).

Her academic work now focuses on how implicit assumptions about gender influence human neuroimaging research, and the inter-relations between scientific and lay understandings of sex/gender. In a recent collaboration, Gina Rippon, Rebecca Jordan-Young, Anelis Kaiser and Cordelia Fine put together recommendations and guidelines for how the methods, analysis and interpretation of human neu-

roimaging investigations of female/male differences can be informed and improved by incorporating key principles from decades of gender scholarship.

## Representative publications

- Fine C (2014). His brain, her brain? *Science* 346: 915-6
- Rippon G, Jordan-Young R, Kaiser A & Fine C (2014). Recommendations for sex/gender neuroimaging research: Key principles and implications for research design, analysis and interpretation. *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*.
- Fine C, Jordan-Young R, Kaiser A & Rippon G (2013). Plasticity, plasticity, plasticity ... and the rigid problem of sex. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 17: 550-551.

If you would like to post any events, announcements, or news of interest please contact us at [neuroethics@ircm.qc.ca](mailto:neuroethics@ircm.qc.ca) (subject line: Brainstorm Events and Announcements)



## Announcements | Annonces

**Call for Abstracts:** Canadian Bioethics Society Annual Meeting, May 25-28, 2016, Toronto, ON

**Submission Deadline:** November 9, 2015, [click here for more info.](#)

**Call for Abstracts:** The 6th Cambridge Consortium for Bioethics Education: Practical Problems and Shared Solutions, July 11-13, 2016, Paris, France

**Submission Deadline:** December 15, 2015, [click here for more info.](#)

**Call for Abstracts:** The Science of Consciousness, April 25-30, 2016, Tucson, AZ

**Submission Deadline:** December 15, 2015, [click here for more info.](#)

**Call for Abstracts:** 13th World Congress of the International Association of Bioethics, June 14-17, 2016, Edinburgh, Scotland

**Submission Deadline:** January 15, 2016, [click here for more info.](#)

**Call for Papers:** International Network on Feminist Approaches to Bioethics World Congress, 13-15 June, 2016, Edinburgh, Scotland

**Submission Deadline:** January 12, 2016, [click here for more info.](#)

### This month in Brainstorm!

#### The International Neuroethics Forum – A New Monthly Column

We are delighted to announce the *International Neuroethics Forum*, a new monthly column in *Brainstorm*. The Forum features contributions on topics at the intersection of ethics, neuroscience, and society from international scholars in a range of disciplines. With an audience of several hundred readers across the world, we are committed to ensuring that *Brainstorm* remains a valuable source of news, events, and stimulating content on neuroethics for our wide readership. The *International Neuroethics Forum* stems from this commitment, and we hope this column will create an avenue for open discussion on ethics, neuroscience, and society.

The *International Neuroethics Forum* is a monthly feature launching in this month's issue (see page 6)! While contributions will be solicited by Brainstorm's editorial board, we will review content proposals submitted to [neuroethics@ircm.qc.ca](mailto:neuroethics@ircm.qc.ca). Contributions will be a maximum of 500-750 words, and will serve as a short but impactful introductions to a research program, reviews of research areas, etc.

# Announcements | Annonces



## Postdoctoral fellowship or graduate student scholarship\*

Area of research: Vulnerability and mental health research ethics

Neuroethics research unit – Institut de recherches cliniques de Montréal (IRCM)  
Supported by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR)

\*This offer could be transformed into a scholarship for a graduate student supervised at the IRCM

We are seeking a postdoctoral fellow or graduate student to join the Neuroethics research unit ([www.ircm.qc.ca/neuroethics/](http://www.ircm.qc.ca/neuroethics/)) to lead research examining ethical and social issues in mental health research. Our project will investigate the theoretical assumptions and practical implications of the concept of "vulnerability" in research with psychiatric patients. Outcomes of this project would include novel and original work examining how the concept of vulnerability affects research ethics policies and practices. This position is funded by a grant from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. This is a 12-month position with possible renewal.

### REQUIREMENTS

- PhD training in bioethics or social science or philosophy or health sciences/mental health (undergraduate degree for candidates to the graduate student scholarship)
- Interest in pursuing theoretical and empirical research in neuroethics
- Very good communication and interpersonal skills
- Publication and scientific communication experience
- Organization skills and proficient time management
- Interdisciplinary teamwork experience an asset
- Ideally, experience in action research or stakeholder research

### DEADLINES

Position remains open until filled.  
Start date: as soon as November 15, 2015

### APPLICATIONS

Submit a resume (CV), cover letter and two reference letters to **Eric Racine**, PhD, Director of the Neuroethics research unit, by email at [neuroethics@ircm.qc.ca](mailto:neuroethics@ircm.qc.ca). Please specify whether you are applying for postdoctoral fellowship or graduate scholarship. Only those selected for an interview will be contacted.

[Click here  
for more  
info!](#)

# Announcements | Annonces



## Postdoctoral fellowship or graduate student scholarship\*

### Areas of research:

- **Interventional ethics research in transitional care**
- **Autism and person-centered research ethics**

### Neuroethics research unit – Institut de recherches cliniques de Montréal (IRCM)

Supported by NeuroDevNet

\*This offer could be transformed into a scholarship for a graduate student supervised at the IRCM

We are seeking a postdoctoral fellow or graduate student to join the Neuroethics research unit ([www.ircm.qc.ca/neuroethics/](http://www.ircm.qc.ca/neuroethics/)) to contribute to research examining ethical and social issues in neurodevelopmental disabilities. The selected candidate will be involved in two projects: (1) an interventional ethics project in transitional care and (2) research on person-centered research ethics in autism. The first project will aim to characterize current best transition practices from an ethics standpoint and the subsequent piloting of an ethics intervention for youth with neurodevelopmental disorders. The second project will involve the design of an innovative ethics framework for autism spectrum disorder research (including alternative informed consent strategies). This position is funded by a grant from NeuroDevNet, a national centre of excellence. This is a 12-month position with possible renewal. Candidates with expertise in implementation science of action-research are invited to submit their application.

#### REQUIREMENTS

- PhD training in bioethics or social science or health sciences or outcomes research (undergraduate degree for candidates to the graduate student scholarship)
- Interest in pursuing empirical research in bioethics
- Ability to work in collaboration with stakeholders
- Very good communication and interpersonal skills
- Publication and scientific communication experience
- Organization skills and proficient time management
- Interdisciplinary teamwork experience
- Ideally, experience in health outcomes research or implementation research

#### DEADLINES

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Start date: as soon as November 15, 2015

#### APPLICATIONS

Submit a resume (CV), cover letter and two reference letters to **Eric Racine, PhD**, Director of the Neuroethics research unit, by email at [neuroethics@ircm.qc.ca](mailto:neuroethics@ircm.qc.ca). Please specify whether you are applying for a postdoctoral fellowship or graduate scholarship. Only those selected for an interview will be contacted.

[Click here for more info!](#)



## Events | Événements

**2015 Loebel Lectures and Workshop:** "The Theoretical Challenge of Modern Psychiatry: No Easy Cure" — Professor Steven E. Hyman

**Date:** November 3-5, 2015

**Location:** Oxford, UK (different locations for lectures and workshop). [Click here for more info.](#)

**"Mind the gap: inequality and its impacts"** with Prof John Muellbauer and Prof Brian Nolan

**Date:** Thursday 5 November, 5pm -6.30pm, Oxford Martin School, Oxford, UK

**To register and for more information:** <http://www.oxfordmartin.ox.ac.uk/event/2202>

**To watch the live webcast:** [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HqoTH1\\_rxqk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HqoTH1_rxqk)

**"Understanding emerging infections"** with Prof Angela McLean

**Date:** Thursday 12 November, 5pm -6.30pm, Oxford Martin School, Oxford, UK

**To register and for more information:** <http://www.oxfordmartin.ox.ac.uk/event/2203>

**To watch the live webcast:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RVGYkwjpcK8>

**"Humans need not apply: a guide to wealth and work in the age of artificial intelligence"** by Jerry Kaplan

**Date:** Monday 16 November, 5:30pm -7pm, Oxford Martin School, Oxford, UK

**To register and for more information:** <http://www.oxfordmartin.ox.ac.uk/event/2188>

**To watch the live webcast:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lwwCfx3fadg>

**Montreal Neuroethics Network Seminar:** TBA — Michelle Stanton-Jean, Ph.D., University of Montreal, Canada

**Date:** November 19, 2015, 12:00pm-1:00pm

**Location:** 110, avenue des Pins Ouest, Room 255, Institut de recherches cliniques de Montréal (IRCM)

**"Creating the perfect human? The ethics of enhancement"** with Prof Julian Savulescu

**Date:** Thursday 19 November, 5pm -6.30pm, Oxford Martin School, Oxford, UK

**To register and for more information:** <http://www.oxfordmartin.ox.ac.uk/event/2204>

**To watch the live webcast:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oh0Bc6GRnh0>

**Conference: Conscience and Conscientious Objection in Healthcare**

**Date:** November 23-24, 2015

**Location:** University of Oxford, SR1 Old Indian Institute, 34 Broad Street, Oxford, UK. [Click here for more info.](#)

**Montreal Neuroethics Network Seminar:** "Consciousness Unbound: The Ethics of Neuroimaging After Severe Brain Injury" — Charles Weijer, Ph.D., Western University, Canada

**Date:** December 3, 2015, 12:00pm-1:00pm

**Location:** 110, avenue des Pins Ouest, Room André-Barbeau, Institut de recherches cliniques

# International Neuroethics Forum

**Kicking off the *International Neuroethics Forum*: An open space for conversations about ethics, neuroscience, and society**

[Eric Racine, PhD](#)

This month, I have the honor – bestowed upon me by my co-editors – of launching Brainstorm’s inaugural *International Neuroethics Forum*. As an editorial team, we are excited to create a space for established and junior scholars, as well as other stakeholders, to voice their concerns and share their ideas about appropriate responses to questions of ethics as they relate to basic and clinical neuroscience. Hence, my chief goal with this contribution is to ensure that a broad vision of the issues is welcomed in our new forum, such that no voice is excluded from conversations about ethics, neuroscience, and society.

In my eyes, and ever since I started investigating questions of neuroethics some fifteen years ago, two major driving factors create the need for more concerted efforts and open discussions to address questions at the intersection of ethics, neuroscience, and society:

On the more clinical end, there are profound challenges associated with neurological and psychiatric conditions. Every new diagnosis challenges each individual to adjust to his or her reality and, potentially, to a different life trajectory. At the same time, a new diagnosis represents a challenge to both interpersonal networks and society more broadly, and to their ability to make room for people who are living with an acute or chronic mental illness or a neurological condition. As we know from different national and international reports,<sup>1,4</sup> this can be a challenging process. However, it can also be an opportunity to step back and reconsider how people living with shorter term or chronic disability are treated in fundamental areas of social activity: schools, work places, healthcare systems, and community and family networks. Everyone knows we could do better, and we could do more; however, it’s partly a matter of deciding where to focus scarce resources and efforts.

On the more basic science end, the evolution of neuroscience, triggered partly by a need and desire to better understand the nature and evolution of neurological and psychiatric illnesses, generates a constant flow of insights and discoveries. These reveal intriguing findings about brain function and mechanisms with an impact not only on how we could diagnose and treat neurological and psychiatric conditions, but also on our view of who we are as human beings. Indeed, neuroscience research can shake our views of ourselves as human beings, or empower us to act upon a range of unsuspected phenomena (e.g., implicit attitudes and cognitive biases).

Accordingly, based on clinical realities and the evolution of neuroscience, important questions emerge. We need to ensure that knowledge progresses (following basic ethical conditions with respect to human rights and democratic societies), and that its implications, through various forms of technological or societal innovations, are reflected upon and

## Brainstorm

and investigated to determine if they are ethical (i.e., if they are acceptable and praiseworthy). In doing so, a number of actors in society are implicated and a series of important questions with possible significant impacts on individual rights and collective wellbeing need to be addressed. A brief non-exhaustive survey can help illustrate the broad and in-depth dialogue required:

**The political dimension:** The profound disequilibrium introduced by any serious health condition challenges the ability of individuals to participate in community life and key social activities such as work, education, and parenting. When illnesses impact brain functions – associated with communication, cognition, physical independence, and emotional responses – people can face serious challenges to their integration and participation in society. Accordingly, the status attributed to those who suffer from acute or chronic neurological and psychiatric conditions, and the provided (or missing) services, raise profound questions concerning the fair distribution of healthcare and its repercussions on active participation in the life of the community. Public representatives need to talk about the barriers to addressing these questions and engage in relevant public conversations. Those who suffer from neurological or psychiatric conditions and those around them (e.g., families, providers) can ensure that a great wealth of human experience is considered; room must be made to promote everyone's participation in the political and economic life of the community.

**The professional dimension:** Professionals involved in the care and treatment of persons with neurological and psychiatric conditions are touched by both the ongoing gaps in healthcare delivery and the growth of diagnostic and treatment options. They stand at the forefront of clinical care, suggesting that they may have insight into what patients and their families need. Healthcare and health service professionals also have irreplaceable perspectives on how we could do better. For example, they can play a key role in revealing ethically and socially problematic situations, and in helping patients having their voices heard by healthcare providers and society

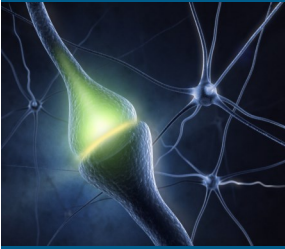
**The personal dimension:** As a person deals with an illness affecting their mood, thoughts, and physical capacities, a life narrative can change. These stories must be told and shared, notably with regard to how social norms, attitudes, and behaviors contribute to their lives in positive and negative ways. Without personal narratives, the full force and impact of 'soft factors' such as human values and attitudes will never be fully appreciated.

**The academic dimension:** Those involved in the investigation of the questions and implications of neuroscience from the angle of ethics, law, and society have the chance to generate knowledge and insights useful to others. They must also reflect on how their own work reaches beyond the confines of academia to ensure that knowledge informs public debate and (clinical, research, and policy) practices for the better.

There is no doubt that much needs to be done and could be done to address a host of challenges associated with research and care in the context of neurological and psychiatric conditions, as well as with basic neuroscience research. No dimension should be left out, so as to direct energy and resources in service of this truly international enterprise. We hope that our attempt to create an opportunity for international neuroethics dialogue with this *Forum* can facilitate the recognition and appreciation of different voices and stakeholder perspectives and thus promote inclusive participation in neuroethical discussions. We welcome brief proposals for contributions at [neuroethics@ircm.qc.ca](mailto:neuroethics@ircm.qc.ca) and invite you to consider sharing your stories and perspectives.

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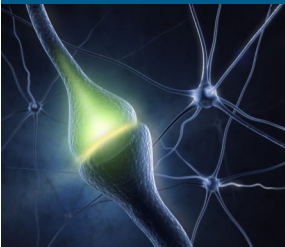
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## Resources | Ressources

[University of British Columbia, National Core for Neuroethics](#)

[Neuroethics at the University of Pennsylvania](#)

[International Neuroethics Society](#)

[Neuroethics Research Unit / L'Unité de recherche en neuroéthique](#)

[Journal of Ethics in Mental Health](#)

[Novel Techethics](#)

[Neuroethics at the Stanford Center for Biomedical Ethics](#)

[Berman Institute of Bioethics' Program in Ethics and Brain Sciences](#)

[Centre interfacultaire en bioéthique et sciences humaines en médecine](#)

[The Neuroethics Blog](#)

[Emory Program in Neuroethics](#)

[American Journal of Bioethics Neuroscience](#)

[Neuroethics Women \(NEW\) Leaders](#)



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