

Erik J. Peterson

CONTACT INFORMATION

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RESEARCH INTERESTS

I study intelligent systems, both biological and artificial, stubbornly rejecting any one research theme. I work across disciplines looking for places where theory and data have begun to diverge. There I use math and models to ask, *what if?*

EDUCATION

Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO

Ph.D, Psychology

2012

M.S., Psychology

2009

California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, CA

B.S., Chemistry and Biochemistry; Minor, Philosophy

May 2004

SCIENTIFIC POSITIONS

Carnegie Mellon University - Pittsburgh, PA

Research Fellow (Research Scientist)

2018 - Present

Biologically-inspired methods for cooperative AI. Game theory. Reinforcement learning. Curiosity learning. Astrocyte computation.

Kernel, LLC - Los Angeles, CA

Senior Research Scientist

2017 - 2018

Technical lead building a *real-time* system for complex spatio-temporal field shaping in deep brain stimulation.

U.C. San Diego - San Diego, CA

Postdoctoral Fellow

2014 - 2017

Novel theoretical accounts and biophysical modeling of neural oscillations. Advised and developed projects using machine-learning to analyze electrophysiological time-series data.

University of Pittsburgh - Pittsburgh, PA

Postdoctoral Fellow

2012 - 2013

Theoretical and empirical analysis of human decision making. Machine learning analysis of fMRI data.

Colorado State University - Fort Collins, CO

Graduate Research Assistant

2006 - 2012

Human reinforcement learning and category learning. Modelling and fMRI data analysis. Software development.

Biosearch Technologies - Novato, CA

Research Assistant II

2004 - 2006

Optimization of high-throughput chemistry. Reporter gene development.

Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory - Livermore, CA

Research Assistant

2003 - 2004

Self-assembly of virus particles to build functional nanostructures. Mechanisms of “ink” transfer in Dip Pen Nano-lithography.

PUBLICATIONS

Papers

- **Peterson EJ** & Verstynen T, A way around the exploration-exploitation dilemma, bioRxiv 671362v5 (2019).
- **Peterson EJ** & Verstynen T, Artificial astrocyte networks, *In prep.* (2019).
- Izhikevich L, Gao R, **Peterson EJ** & Bradley Voytek, Measuring the average power of neural oscillations, bioRxiv 441626 (2018). Under review at *J. Neurosci. Methods*.
- **Peterson EJ**, Müyesser NA, Verstynen T & Dunovan K, Keep it stupid simple, ArXiv 1809.03406 (2018). Under review at *Neurons, Behavior, Data analysis, and Theory*.
- Agarwal A, Kumar AV, Dunovan K, **Peterson EJ**, Verstynen T & Sycara K, Better safe than sorry: evidence accumulation allows for safe reinforcement learning, ArXiv 1809.09147 (2018).
- **Peterson EJ** & Voytek B, Homeostatic mechanisms may shape the type and duration of oscillatory modulation, bioRxiv 615450v1 (2018). Under review at *J Neurophys.*
- **Peterson EJ** & Voytek B, Learning with discrete representations using continuous chaotic neural populations *In prep* (2019).
- **Peterson EJ** & Voytek B, Healthy oscillatory coordination is bounded by single-unit computation, bioRxiv 309427 (2018).
- Matar Haller[1], Thomas Donoghue[1], **Erik Peterson**[1], Paroma Varma, Priyadarshini Sebastian, Richard Gao, Torben Noto, Robert T. Knight, Avgusta Shestyuk, Bradley Voytek, Parameterizing neural power spectra, bioRxiv 29985 (2018). [1]: Co-first. Under review at *Nature Neuroscience*.
- **Peterson EJ** & Voytek B, Alpha rhythmically alters gain by modulating excitatory-inhibitory background activity, bioRxiv 185074v2 (2017).
- Gao RD, **Peterson EJ**, Voytek B, Inferring synaptic excitation/inhibition balance from field potentials, *Neuroimage* Sep;158:70-78 (2017).
- **Peterson EJ**, Burke QR, Campbell AM, Belger A, Voytek B, 1/f neural noise is a better predictor of schizophrenia than neural oscillations, bioRxiv 113449v4 (2017)
- Cole SR, **Peterson EJ**, van der Meij R, Hemptinne C, Starr PA, & Voytek B, Nonsinusoidal oscillations underlie pathological phase-amplitude coupling in the motor cortex in Parkinson's disease, *J Neurosci* 37(18) (2017)
- **Peterson EJ** and Voytek B, Balanced oscillatory coupling improves information flow, bioRxiv 030304v2 (2016).
- **Peterson EJ** and Seger CA, In model-based fMRI significant is less than specific., bioArxiv 429621 (2017).
- **Peterson EJ**, Seger CA and Anderson CA, Many Hats: Changes in the Striatal Bold Signal Across Stimulus, Preparation, Response and Feedback, *Journal of Neurophysiology* 110(7) 1689-1702 (2013).
- Seger CA and **Peterson EJ**, Categorization = Decision Making - Generalization, *Neurosci Biobehav Rev* 37(7) pp1187-1200 (2013).
- Seger CA, Dennison CM, Lopez-Paniagua DL, **Peterson EJ**, and Roark AA, Dissociating Hippocampal and Basal Ganglia Contributions to Category Learning Using Stimulus Novelty and Subjective Judgments, *Neuroimage* 55(4), pp1739-53 (2011).
- Seger CA, **Peterson EJ**, Cincotta C, Lopez-Paniagua DL and Anderson C, Dissociating the Contributions of Independent Corticostriatal Systems to Visual Categorization Learning Through the Use of Reinforcement Learning Modeling and Granger Causality Modeling, *NeuroImage* 50(2) pp644-656 (2010).
- Bedoukian MA, Whitesell J, **Peterson EJ**, Clay C and Partin KM, The Stargazin C Terminus Encodes an Intrinsic and Transferable Membrane Sorting Signal, *J. Biol. Chem.*, 283(3), pp1597-1600 (2008).

- Johansson HE, Johansson MK, Wong AC, Armstrong ES, **Peterson EJ**, Grant RE, Roy MA, Reddington MV and Cook RM, BTII, an Azoreductase with pH Dependent Substrate Specificity, *Appl Environ Microbiol* Jun;77(12):4223-5 (2012).
- Cheung CL, Rubinstein AI, **Peterson EJ**, Chatterji A, Sabirianov RF, Mei W, Lin T, Johnson JE and DeYoreo JJ, Steric and Electrostatic Complementarity in the Assembly of Two-Dimensional Virus Arrays, *Langmuir* 26 (5) pp3498–3505 (2010).

Posters

- **Peterson EJ** & Verstynen T, A way around the exploration-exploitation dilemma, presented at Conference on Cognitive Computational Neuroscience (CCN), Berlin Germany, 2019.
- **Peterson EJ** & Verstynen T, Artificial astrocyte networks, presented at The Bernstein Conference, Berlin Germany, 2019.
- **Peterson EJ** & Voytek B, Homeostasis and oscillatory modulation, presented at Society for Neuroscience (SFN), San Diego CA, 2018.
- **Peterson EJ**, Müyesser NA, Dunovan K & Verstynen T, Combining heuristics with counterfactual play in reinforcement learning, presented at Conference on Cognitive Computational Neuroscience (CCN), Philadelphia PA, 2018
- **Peterson EJ** & Voytek B, The tradeoff between oscillatory coordination and neural computation, presented at Society for Neuroscience (SFN), Washington DC, 2017.
- **Peterson EJ** & Voytek B, Gain control across cortical layers can be mediated by balanced oscillatory coupling, presented at Society for Neuroscience (SFN), San Diego, CA 2016.
- Haxby S & **Peterson EJ**, Learning with discrete representations using continuous chaotic neural populations, presented at Society for Neuroscience (SFN), San Diego, CA 2016.
- Gao R, **Peterson EJ**, & Voytek V, Spiking correlates and temporal variability of oscillatory frequency modulation, presented at Society for Neuroscience (SFN), San Diego, CA 2016.
- Rosen BQ, **Peterson EJ**, Campbell AM, Belger A & Voytek B, Spectral 1/f noise differences account for apparent oscillatory band-specific effects in Schizophrenia, presented at Society for Neuroscience (SFN), San Diego, CA 2016.
- L. Izhikevich L, **Peterson EJ** and Voytek B, Neural oscillatory power is not Gaussian distributed across time, presented at Society for Neuroscience (SFN), San Diego, CA 2016.
- **Peterson EJ** & Wheeler MW, The diversity of distributed decisions, presented at Society for Neuroscience (SFN), San Diego, CA 2015.
- **Peterson EJ** & Voytek B. Spike-field coupling does not imply spike-spike coupling, presented at Society for Neuroscience (SFN), San Diego, CA 2015.
- Noto T, Gao R, **Peterson EJ**, Voytek B. Neural network properties can be inferred from electrophysiological power spectral geometry, presented at Society for Neuroscience (SFN), San Diego, CA 2015.
- Cole SR, **Peterson EJ**, de Hemptinne C, Starr PA, Voytek B. Deep brain stimulation increases motor cortical 1/f noise and decouples high gamma amplitude from beta phase, presented at Society for Neuroscience (SFN), San Diego, CA 2015.
- **Peterson EJ** & Seger CS, A precise problem in model-based fMRI?, presented at Cognitive Neuroscience Society Meeting (CNS), San Francisco, CA, May 2013.
- **Peterson EJ** & Seger CS, Evidence for generalizable reward representations in the basal ganglia examined using fMRI and reinforcement learning, International Meeting of the Basal Ganglia Society 11, Eilat, Israel, March 2013.
- **Peterson EJ** & Wheeler M, Looking everywhere for the right model of perceptual decision making, Computational Neuroscience Poster Session, Center for the Neural Basis of Cognition, Pittsburgh, PA, January 2013.

- **Peterson EJ** & Seger CA, Many Hats: Using fMRI to Characterize the Roles and Reward Sensitivity of the Striatum Across Stimulus, Response and Feedback., International Meeting of the Basal Ganglia Society 10, Long Branch, NJ, 2010.
- **Peterson EJ** and Seger, CA, Reward-level dependent activity proceeding and following response selection: an fMRI study, presented at SFN2009, Chicago, IL, Fall 2009.
- **Peterson EJ** and Seger, CA, To Do the Right Thing: Temporal Difference Learning As Tool to Dissect the Role of Feedback in the Striatum, presented at Cognitive Neuroscience Society Meeting (CNS), San Francisco, CA, May 2007.
- Wong MK, Armstrong ES, **Peterson EJ**, Grant RE, Cook RM, and Johnanssen HJ, The BIT1 Azoreductase Colormetric and Fluorometric Reporter System, presented at Experimental Biology 2009, New Orleans, April 2009.
- Sowers BA, **Peterson EJ**, Grant RE, Lin WY, Dick DJ and Cook RM, Optimization of Probe Performance in Real-Time PCR through an Understanding of Synthesis Impurities, presented at Quantitative PCR, San Diego (CA) March, 2005.
- **Peterson EJ**, Weeks BL, De Yoreo JJ, and Schwartz PV, Effect of Environmental Conditions on Dip Pen Nanolithography of Mercaptohexadecanoic Acid, J. Phys. Chem B (2004), 108 (39), pp15206-15210.

Theses

- EJ. Peterson, [Rewards are Categories?](#), PhD Dissertation (2012).

SOFTWARE

Code for all projects is available as Open Source Software.

- [glia_playing_atari](#): An implementation of artificial astrocyte networks, in Python and PyTorch.
- [infomercial](#): Simulate agents who seek information and reward in equal measure, in Python and PyTorch.
- [azad](#): RL agents that use simple heuristics, in Python and PyTorch.
- [fakespikes](#): Model spiking as a statistical process, in Python.
- [pacpy](#): Calculate phase-amplitude coupling in Python (and Matlab).
- [chinoise](#): Create simple LFP simulations, with 1/f noise.
- [danalysis](#): A very basic library for studying recurrence matrices.
- [pacological](#): Spiking simulations of good and bad PAC.
- [syncological](#): A detailed look at the synchronization and coding fidelity of gamma oscillations.
- [bw](#): Toy simulations to try and better interpret peak bandwidth in power spectra.
- [kdf](#): A language agnostic key-value interface for hdf5.
- [rl](#): A python library for fitting reinforcement learning models to behavioral data
- [modelmodel](#): analyze and simulate (model-based) fMRI in python
- [fmrilearn](#): a set of helper functions to analyze fMRI data in scikit-learn
- [roi](#): A specialized module for doing parametric ROI analyses of fMRI data.
- [ds](#): A python module for dynamical systems analysis. It's for learning not for real work.
- [accumulate](#): Compare decision making theories baed on information accumulation across every possible 2 choice trial (of length L).
- [bigstats](#): A python library for calculating statistics, incrementally.
- [similarity](#): Some similarity measures for perceptual categories.
- [simplepsychtoolbox](#): A set of simple functions for doing common tasks with Psychtoolbox.
- [artificialGrammar](#): Create and analyze artificial grammars

- [seq](#): First, second and third order effects in behavioral (or other) data.

TALKS

- *Artificial astrocyte networks*, SFN (Nanosymposium), Chicago, Oct 2019.
- *Build your own brainwaves*, Nerd Nite, Los Angeles, Feb 2018.
- *Conflicted data science*, Open San Diego, San Diego, Feb, 2016.
- *The electronic dance club brain*, Nerd Nite, San Diego, Oct 2016.
- *In theory you're paying attention*, Ignite, San Diego, Nov 2016.
- *Science ambassador*, Science Hack Day, San Francisco, Oct, 2014.

TEACHING

- *Fall 2018*: Guest lecture in Neural and Cognitive Models of Adaptive Decisions (85-435 & 85-735) at Carnegie Mellon.
- *Fall 2014 - 2017*: Multiple guest lectures in Introduction to Data Science (COGS 9) at U.C. San Diego.
- *Fall 2014 - 2017*: Multiple guest lectures in Data Science In Practice (COGS 108) at U.C. San Diego.
- *Fall 2012*: Taught upper-division laboratory, Sense and Perception (PSY 457) at Colorado State University.
- *Spring 2011*: Taught upper-division laboratory, Neuroanatomy (PSY 459) at Colorado State University.

ACTIVITIES

- *Summer 2014*: Summer school in Theoretical Neuroscience, University of Waterloo.
- *Summer 2003*: Undergraduate Summer Research Fellowship, Lawrence Livermore National, Laboratory Livermore CA.

AWARDS

- *2010*: Editor's Choice Award, Systems Neuroscience Section, NeuroImage.