

# Polyphony J. Bruna

PHD STUDENT · COGNITIVE AND INFORMATION SCIENCES

University of California, Merced

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## Education

Research Interests: Computational Modeling, Complex & Dynamical Systems, Coordination, Alignment, Philosophy

### University of California, Merced

Merced, CA

PHD COGNITIVE AND INFORMATION SCIENCES

Expected 2027

- Advisors: Christopher T. Kello and Michael J. Spivey
- Other committee members: Jeff Yoshimi

### University of California, Los Angeles

Los Angeles, CA

GRADUATE FELLOW, INSTITUTE FOR PURE AND APPLIED MATHEMATICS

Fall 2024

- Program: Mathematics of Intelligences

### Vassar College

Poughkeepsie, NY

BA COGNITIVE SCIENCE AND PHILOSOPHY

2018 - 2022

- Minor in Japanese
- Overall GPA: 3.99/4.00
- Honors: *Phi Beta Kappa, Sigma Xi, Psi Chi, cum laude generalis et cum laude in materia subiecta*
- Thesis advisors: Jan Andrews and Josh de Leeuw  
Title: "Leveraging Surprise in a Recurrent Neural Network to (de)Construct Morphological Complexity in Japanese"

## Professional Experience

- 2024 **Humane Studies Fellow**, Institute for Humane Studies, George Mason University
- 2022-2023 **Adolph Sutro Fellow**, Vassar College
- 2021-2022 **Intern**, Dept. of Cognitive Science, Vassar College
- 2021 **Senior Researcher**, Undergraduate Research Summer Institute, Vassar College
- 2019, 2020 **Research Fellow**, Undergraduate Research Summer Institute, Vassar College
- 2018-2021 **Research Assistant**, Cognitive Science, Vassar College

## Publications

\* Denotes co-principal authorship

### IN PREP

Kello, C. & **Bruna, P.** *Emergent Mental Lexicon Functions in ChatGPT.*

**Bruna, P.** & Gyllingberg, L. *Non-neural Pattern Completion in an Adaptive Reservoir Computer.*

**Bruna, P.** & Yoshimi, J. *A Heideggerian Account of Alignment.*

### PUBLISHED

**Bruna, P.** and Kello, C. (2025). Least Effort and Alignment in Task-Oriented Communication. *Cognitive Science*, 49, Article e70062. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cogs.70062>

Abbas, M., Alharthi, D., Balbas, J., Beckelhymer, D., Beylkin, G., **Bruna, P.**, Cartmill, E., Chormai, P., Corea, F., Dai, X., Das, P., Dipoppa, M., Eberle, O., El Hady, A., Evans, J., Feghhi, E., Flack, J., Flores, C., Foster, J., ... Zhu, Y. (2021). White Paper: "Mathematics of Intelligences." *Institute for Pure and Applied Mathematics*. <https://www.ipam.ucla.edu/reports>

de Leeuw, J. R., Andrews, J., Barney, L., Bigler, M., **Bruna, P.**, Chen, Y., Cherry, R., Dowie, D. R., Forbes, E., Haffey, B., Hu, X., Jaklitsch, M., Leopold, N., Lewis, C., MacDonald, D., McShaffrey, C., Nakayama, K., Olstad, W., Peng, R., ... Zhang, L. (2021). Words May Jump-Start Meaning More Than Vision: A Non-Replication of Early ERP Effects in Boutonnet and Lupyan (2015). *Collabra: Psychology*, 7(1). <https://doi.org/10.1525/collabra.29763>

## PROCEEDINGS

- Kello, C. & **Bruna, P.** (2024). Emergent Mental Lexicon Functions in ChatGPT. *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society*, 46. <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/5m9098b5>
- \*Rane, S., \***Bruna, P.**, Sucholutsky, I., Kello, C., & Griffiths, T. (2023). Concept alignment. *1st NeurIPS Workshop on AI meets Moral Philosophy and Moral Psychology (MP2)*. <https://arxiv.org/abs/2401.08672>

## NON-ACADEMIC ARTICLES

- 2019 **Vassar College Journal of Philosophy**, "Taking Back Philosophy: A Multicultural Manifesto", Book Review

## Presentations

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\* Presenting author(s); + Mentored undergraduate

## CONTRIBUTED TALKS

- \*Gyllingberg, L. & \***Bruna, P.** 2024. *Non-neural Pattern Completion in an Adaptive Reservoir Computer*. Mathematics of Intelligences Culminating Workshop at Lake Arrowhead, Institute for Pure and Applied Mathematics, University of California, Los Angeles.
- \***Bruna, P.** & Kello, C. 2024. *Least Effort and Alignment in Task-Oriented Communication*. Mathematics of Intelligences Seminar Series, Institute for Pure and Applied Mathematics, University of California, Los Angeles.
- Rane, S., \***Bruna, P.**, Sucholutsky, I., Kello, C., & Griffiths, T. 2024. *Concept Alignment*. Mathematics of Intelligences Working Group on Architecture and Evaluation of Generative AI, Institute for Pure and Applied Mathematics, University of California, Los Angeles.
- \***Bruna, P.** 2024. *Homeostatic, Spiking Reservoir Computation for Pattern Completion through Time (Falandays et al., 2021/2023)*. Mathematics of Intelligences Working Group on Ecological and Homeostatic Intelligence, Institute for Pure and Applied Mathematics, University of California, Los Angeles.
- \***Bruna, P.**, Ryskin, R., & Spivey, M. J. 2023. *Semantics and Syntax Co-emerge in Adaptive Reservoir Network Dynamics*. Diverse Intelligences Summit, University of St. Andrews, Scotland.
- \***Bruna, P.** 2020. *Hearing That It Is Silent: How to Hallucinate a Non-Perception*. 10th Annual Mid-Hudson Valley Undergraduate Philosophy Conference, Marist College, Poughkeepsie, NY. (Canceled due to COVID-19)

## CONTRIBUTED POSTERS

- \*Gyllingberg, L., Tian, Y., Sumpter, D., & **Bruna, P.** 2025. *Oscillations and Adaptation: Mathematical Models of Non-Neural Cognition*. Biological Systems that Learn, National Institute for Theory and Mathematics in Biology, Chicago, IL.
- \***Bruna, P.** & \*Kello, C. 2024. *Alignment Through Dyadic Least Effort in Task-Oriented Conversations*. 65th Annual Meeting of the Psychonomic Society, New York City, NY.
- \***Bruna, P.** & Kello, C. 2024. *Alignment Through Dyadic Least Effort in Task-Oriented Conversations*. Modeling Multi-Scale Collective Intelligences, Institute for Pure and Applied Mathematics, University of California, Los Angeles.
- \*Kello, C. & \***Bruna, P.** 2024. *Emergent Mental Lexicon Functions in ChatGPT*. 46th Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society, Rotterdam, Netherlands.
- \*\*Thao, K., **Bruna, P.**, & Kello, C. 2024. *Exploring Emergent Embodied Intelligence in Large Language Models: Insights from ChatGPT-4*. 15th Annual California Cognitive Science Conference, Berkeley, CA.
- \*Rane, S. & \***Bruna, P.** 2023. *Concept alignment*. 1st NeurIPS Workshop on AI meets Moral Philosophy and Moral Psychology (MP2), New Orleans, LA.
- \*\*Leshock, E., \*\*Pena, Y., **Bruna, P.**, & Andrews, J. 2021. *Learned Categorical Perception with Artificially Generated Faces*. 36th Annual URSI Symposium, Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY.
- \*Bigler, M. & \***Bruna, P.** 2020. *Probing the Methodology and Interpretation of Learned Categorical Perception Research*. 35th Annual URSI Symposium, Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY.
- \***Bruna, P.** & \*Marks, P. 2019. *Psychophysical Adaptive Procedure: Developing a New, Generalizable Method*. 34th Annual URSI Symposium, Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY.

## INVITED TALKS

Fall 2024. *Least Effort and Alignment in Task-Oriented Communication*. Dept. of Cognitive Science, Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY.

## Honors

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- 2025 Graduate Student Highlight ("Rising Star: How Life's Journey Shaped a Cognitive Scientist's Path to Discovery"), <https://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/Polyphony-J-Bruna>
- 2022 Best Technical Write-Up, Mid-Hudson IEEE Undergraduate Capstone Project Awards

## Awards, Fellowships, & Grants

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\* Awarded but declined

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| 2025 | Hayek Fund, Institute for Humane Studies  | \$ 2,400  |
| 2024 | Humane Studies Fellowship, Institute for Humane Studies   | \$ 5,000  |
|      | MacKenzie Scott Graduate Student Travel Award, University of California, Merced   | \$ 1,000  |
| 2023 | Alumni Award, Diverse Intelligences Summer Institute  | \$ 750    |
|      | Cognitive and Information Sciences Fall Fellowship, University of California, Merced  | \$ 22,500 |
| 2022 | Chancellor's Recruitment Fellowship, University of California, Merced   | \$ 45,000 |
|      | *Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) Fellowship, U.S. Department of Education  | \$ 22,500 |
|      | Adolph Sutro Fellowship, Vassar College   | \$ 10,000 |
|      | The Jamie Nisse Greenberg Philosophy Prize, Vassar College  | \$ 900    |
|      | Critical Language Scholarship for advanced Japanese, alternate, U.S. Department of State; American Councils for International Education |           |
| 2021 | Frances Lehman Loeb 1928 Scholarship, Vassar College  | \$ 44,000 |
|      | Research Award, Vassar College  | \$ 4,000  |
| 2020 | Frances Lehman Loeb 1928 Scholarship, Vassar College  | \$ 44,000 |
|      | Undergraduate Research Summer Institute Fellowship, Vassar College  | \$ 5,000  |
| 2019 | Frances Lehman Loeb 1928 Scholarship, Vassar College  | \$ 42,500 |
|      | Undergraduate Research Summer Institute Fellowship, Vassar College  | \$ 5,000  |
| 2018 | 1956 Memorial Scholarship, Vassar College   | \$ 42,000 |

## Teaching Experience

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- Spr. 2025 Critical Reasoning, Teaching Assistant, Dept. of Philosophy, University of California, Merced
- Spr. 2024 Contemporary Moral Problems, Teaching Assistant, Dept. of Philosophy, University of California, Merced
- Spr. 2022 Introduction to Cognitive Science, Teaching Assistant, Dept. of Cognitive Science, Vassar College
- Fall 2021 Introduction to Cognitive Science, Teaching Assistant, Dept. of Cognitive Science, Vassar College

## Outreach & Professional Development

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### WORKSHOPS & TRAINING

- 2025 **Complexity Science Hub**, Winter School on Complex Systems in Our Changing World, *Vienna, Austria*
- 2024 **Institute for Pure and Applied Mathematics**, Mathematics of Intelligences Culminating Retreat, *UCLA Lake Arrowhead Lodge*  
**Institute for Pure and Applied Mathematics**, Modeling Multi-Scale Collective Intelligences, *University of California, Los Angeles*  
**Berggruen Institute**, Future Humans Workshop on Computational Consciousness, *Beverly Hills, California*  
**Institute for Pure and Applied Mathematics**, Naturalistic Approaches to Artificial Intelligence, *University of California, Los Angeles*  
**Institute for Humane Studies**, Aristotle and Human-Centered AI, *Webinar*  
**Institute for Pure and Applied Mathematics**, Theory and Practice of Deep Learning, *University of California, Los Angeles*  
**Dynamic Interactions and Methodologies Symposium**, *University of California, Los Angeles*  
**Institute for Pure and Applied Mathematics**, Analyzing High-dimensional Traces of Intelligent Behavior, *University of California, Los Angeles*
- 2023 **Sante Fe Institute**, Complexity-GAINs International Summer School on Intelligence and Representation, *Isaac Newton Institute for Mathematical Sciences, University of Cambridge*  
**Diverse Intelligences Summer Institute**, *University of St. Andrews*
- 2022 **Phi Beta Kappa**, Key Connections, *Webinar*
- 2020 **Center for Philosophy of Science**, Pittsburgh Summer Program in Philosophy of Science and Specialized Sciences, *University of Pittsburgh and Carnegie Mellon University*

### SERVICE POSITIONS

- 2025 **Brownbag Organizer**, Cognitive and Information Sciences, *University of California, Merced*  
**Book Club President**, Cognitive and Information Sciences, *University of California, Merced*
- 2023-2024 **Graduate Student Chair**, Cognitive and Information Sciences, *University of California, Merced*  
**Mentor**, Learning Aligned Employment Program, *University of California, Merced*
- 2021 **Mentor**, Undergraduate Research Summer Institute, *Vassar College*
- 2018-2019 **Editor**, Vassar College Journal of Philosophy, *Vassar College*

### PEER REVIEW

Journal of Experimental Psychology: General  
Minds and Machines

### PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

MetaSTEM, Research Group on the Philosophy and Science of Science  
Cognitive Science Society  
Phi Beta Kappa  
Sigma Xi, The Scientific Research Honor Society

Psi Chi, International Honor Society in Psychology

## SKILLS

Languages: English (native), Japanese (conversational)

Programming: Python, R, JavaScript, HPC parallel computing

Technical: Neural networks, Information theory, Bayesian statistics, Data visualization