

YUHAN HELENA LIU

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Citizenship: Canada

EDUCATION

PhD., Applied Mathematics, University of Washington (UW) <i>Advisor:</i> Prof. Eric Shea-Brown	2024
MASc., Electrical and Computer Engineering, University of Toronto (U of T)	2019
BASc., Engineering Science (Electrical and Computer Option), U of T	2017

VISITING RESEARCH POSITIONS

Visiting researcher, MIT McGovern Institute	2023
Research intern, Mila – Quebec AI Institute	2021 - 2023
Visiting scientist, Allen Institute for Brain Science	2020 - 2023

HONORS AND AWARDS

Boeing Teaching Award: 300 USD	2024
Rising Stars in Computational and Data Sciences, UT Austin	2024
FRQNT Postdoctoral Research Fellowship: 90000 CAD (ranked 1st)	2024 - 2026
IVADO Postdoctoral Fellowship: 210000 CAD (offered, but declined)	2024
NSERC Postdoctoral Fellowship: 90000 CAD (offered, but declined)	2024
Carl E. Pearson Fellowship: 37000 USD*	2023 - 2024
FRQNT Doctoral Research Fellowship: 25000 CAD	2023 - 2024
FRQNT Doctoral Research Fellowship Supplement: 1500 CAD**	2023 - 2024
Weill Neurohub and NeuroTEC Travel Award: 500 USD	2023
Mitacs Globalink Research Award: 6000 CAD	2023
NeurIPS Scholar Award: 1748 USD	2022
NSF AccelNet IN-BIC Exchange Fellowship: 10000 USD	2022
Boeing Research Award: 500 USD	2021
NSF AccelNet IN-BIC Exchange Fellowship: 8400 USD	2021
NSERC Postgraduate Scholarship (PGS D3): 63000 CAD	2020 - 2023
Queen Elizabeth II Graduate Scholarship: 15000 CAD	2018 - 2019
Ontario Graduate Scholarship: 15000 CAD	2017 - 2018
U of T Engineering Science Capstone Design Winner: 1500 CAD	2017
U of T Engineering Society Award: 4200 CAD	2015
NSERC Undergraduate Summer Research Award: 5600 CAD	2014
U of T Club for Biomedical Engineering Competition Winner: 300 CAD	2014
U of T Tetra Enable Competition Potential Award: 200 CAD	2013

Total amount obtained: about 280,000 CAD

*= Administered by the UW Applied Mathematics Department and has been awarded to only three individuals in the department's history, including myself, at the NSF GRFP rate (adjusted based on the FRQNT support)

**= Attributed to the ten eligible applications in the Québec province that received the highest ranking among all committees

PEER-REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS

- Liu, Y.H.**, Baratin A., Cornford J., Mihalas S., Shea-Brown E., Lajoie G., “How connectivity structure shapes rich and lazy learning in neural circuits”, International Conference on Learning Representations (ICLR), 2024.
- Ghosh A., **Liu Y.H.**, Lajoie G., Kording K., Richards B. A., “How gradient estimator variance and bias impact learning in neural networks”, ICLR, 2023.
- Liu Y.H.**, Ghosh A., Richards B. A., Shea-Brown E., Lajoie G., “Beyond accuracy: generalization properties of bio-plausible temporal credit assignment rules”, Advances in Neural Information Processing Systems (NeurIPS), 2022.
- Liu Y.H.**, Smith S.J., Mihalas S., Shea-Brown E., Sumbul U., “Biologically-plausible backpropagation through arbitrary timespans via local neuromodulators”, NeurIPS, 2022.
- Liu Y.H.**, Smith S.J., Mihalas S., Shea-Brown E., Sumbul U., “Cell-type-specific neuromodulation guides synaptic credit assignment in a spiking neural network”, Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS), 2021.
- Liu Y.**, Grigorovsky V., Bardakjian B., “Excitation and inhibition balance underlying epileptiform activity,” Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) Transaction on Biomedical Engineering, 2020.
- Jacobs D., **Liu Y.H.**, Hilton T., del Campo M., Carlen P.L., Bardakjian B.L., “Classification of scalp EEG states prior to clinical seizure onset,” IEEE Journal of Translational Engineering in Health and Medicine, 2019.
- Liu Y.**, Khisti A., Mahajan A., “On privacy in smart metering systems with periodically time-varying input distribution,” Proceedings of IEEE Global Conference on Signal and Information Processing, 2017.
- Liu Y.H.**, Lee S-H., Khisti A., “Information-theoretic privacy in smart metering systems using cascaded rechargeable batteries,” IEEE Signal Processing Letters, 2017.

PREPRINTS

- Mastrovito D., **Liu, Y.H.**, Kusmierz L., Shea-Brown E., Koch C., Mihalas S., “Transition to chaos separates learning regimes and relates to measure of consciousness in recurrent neural networks”, bioRxiv, 2024.
- Hazelden J., **Liu, Y.H.**, Shlizerman E., Shea-Brown E., “Evolutionary algorithms as an alternative to backpropagation for supervised training of biophysical neural networks and neural ODEs”, arXiv, 2023.
- Liu, Y.H.**, Smith S.J., Mihalas S., Shea-Brown E., Sumbul U., “A solution to temporal credit assignment using cell-type-specific modulatory signals,” BioRxiv, 2021.

INVITED TALKS

Kempner Institute at Harvard University	12/2023
Neural Theory Group at the University of Oregon	11/2023
The Center for the Physics of Biological Function at Princeton University	11/2023
MetaConscious Group at MIT McGovern Institute	10/2023
Grossman Center at the University of Chicago	10/2023
Pillow Lab at Princeton University	10/2023
NeuralAI reading group at Mila – Quebec AI Institute	10/2022
UW Neural Computation and Engineering Connection	05/2022
International Network for Bio-Inspired Computing	04/2022
Lajoie Group at Mila – Quebec AI Institute	09/2021
Summer Workshop on the Dynamic Brain at the Allen Institute	08/2021

ACCEPTED ORAL PRESENTATIONS

- Liu, Y.H.**, Baratin A., Cornford J., Mihalas S., Shea-Brown E., Lajoie G., “How connectivity structure shapes rich and lazy learning in neural circuits”, NeuroAI Montreal, 2023.
- Liu, Y.H.**, Smith S.J., Mihalas S., Shea-Brown E., Sumbul U., “Biologically-plausible backpropagation through arbitrary timespans via local neuromodulators,” Computational and Systems Neuroscience (COSYNE), 2023.
- Liu, Y.H.**, Ghosh A., Shea-Brown E., Lajoie G., “Beyond accuracy: robustness and generalization properties of biologically plausible learning rules,” From Neuroscience to Artificially Intelligent Systems (NAISys), 2022.
- Liu, Y.H.**, “A Large-Scale Neuro-Glial Network Model of Seizure Termination,” U of T Annual Research Conference, 2019.

ACCEPTED POSTER PRESENTATIONS

- Liu, Y.H.**, Baratin A., Cornford J., Mihalas S., Shea-Brown E., Lajoie G., “How connectivity structure shapes rich and lazy learning in neural circuits”, COSYNE, 2024.
- Liu, Y.H.**, Baratin A., Cornford J., Mihalas S., Shea-Brown E., Lajoie G., “How recurrent network connectivity shapes learning: implications for effective rich and lazy regimes in neuroscience”, Lake Conference – Neural Coding and Dynamics, 2023.
- Liu Y.H.**, Ghosh A., Richards B. A., Shea-Brown E., Lajoie G., “Beyond accuracy: generalization properties of bio-plausible temporal credit assignment rules”, 9th Annual BRAIN Initiative Meeting, 2023.
- Liu, Y.H.**, Smith S.J., Mihalas S., Shea-Brown E., Sumbul U., “Biologically-plausible backpropagation through arbitrary timespans via local neuromodulators,” NeuroAI in Seattle, 2022.
- Liu, Y.H.**, Lajoie G., “Beyond accuracy: robustness and generalization properties of biologically plausible learning rules,” COSYNE, 2022.
- Liu, Y.H.**, Smith S.J., Mihalas S., Shea-Brown E., Sumbul U., “A solution to temporal credit assignment using cell-type-specific modulatory signals,” COSYNE, 2021.

TEACHING AND MENTORING EXPERIENCES

Instructor of Record

- Introduction to Neural Coding and Computation, UW 01/2024 – 03/2024
- Applied Linear Algebra and Numerical Analysis, UW 06/2022 – 08/2022

Research Mentoring

- Weixuan Liu*, Computer Science Undergrad 04/2023 – present
- Rita Zhang*, Mathematics Undergrad 04/2023 – present
- Hanson Mo*, Physics Undergrad 10/2023 – present

Course Design Assistant**, Neuromatch Academy 04/2023 – 07/2023

Guest Lecturer

- Mathematical Biology, Whitworth University 01/2024

Teaching Assistant

- COSYNE Tutorial on Spiking Neural Networks 03/2022
- Calculus with Analytic Geometry, UW 09/2019 – 12/2020
- Fundamentals of Computer Programming, U of T 01/2019 – 04/2019
- Linear Algebra, U of T 09/2018 – 12/2018
- Calculus III, U of T 09/2018 – 12/2018
- Introduction to Computer Programming, U of T 09/2017 – 12/2017

* Each of my three mentees is preparing their first-authored manuscript under my supervision.

** Designed teaching tools based on **large language models (LLMs)** to provide expanded explanations on course material and to guide students through coding exercises

SERVICE AND OUTREACH

Co-organizer, COSYNE 2024 Workshop 01/2024 – 03/2024

Reviewer, COSYNE 2024 12/2023

Secretary, UW Association for Women in Mathematics 09/2023 – 05/2024

Reviewer, NeurIPS 2023 06/2023 – 08/2023

Session Chair, UW Neural Computation and Engineering Connection 05/2023

Outreach Volunteer, SIAM Math Fair at Lockwood Elementary School 05/2023

Reviewer, COSYNE 2023 12/2022

Panelist, UW SIAM Student Chapter 10/2020 – 12/2023

Student Organizer, Fairhall and Shea-Brown Joint Lab Meetings 01/2022 – 06/2022

Student Organizer, UW Theoretical Neuroscience Journal Club 09/2020 – 06/2021

Mentor, UW Amath Student Mentorship Program 07/2020 – 06/2022

Event Director, U of T IEEE Student Chapter 09/2016 – 04/2017

Co-Chair, U of T Engineering Science Education Conference 03/2015 – 02/2016

ADDITIONAL TRAINING

Summer Workshop on the Dynamic Brain, Allen Institute for Brain Science 08/2021

TECHNICAL SKILLS

Strong proficiency in Python (NumPy, Matplotlib, TensorFlow, PyTorch), MATLAB, C/C++, shell scripting and working with supercomputers.

BLOG WRITING

“*Generalization properties of bio-plausible temporal credit assignment rules.*” The Mila Blog (June 2023), URL: <https://tinyurl.com/4hz6uvs9>

SOFTWARE

Research code (<https://github.com/Helena-Yuhan-Liu?tab=repositories>)
Repositories with code to generate figures and experiments from my papers

Last updated: June 12th, 2024