

# Introduction to Neural Networks

## 1. Course Information

Introduction to Neural Networks  
Psychology 9221B, Applied Mathematics 9624B  
Winter 2023

### Times & location

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2-4 pm  
WIRB 1160 (Western students)  
Hybrid synchronous delivery

## 2. Instructor Information

- **Instructors:** Assistant Professors Lyle Muller and Marieke Mur
- **Office:** International Graduate Affairs Building, #3N48 (Muller) and #3N50 (Mur)
- **E-mail (preferred):** [lmuller2@uwo.ca](mailto:lmuller2@uwo.ca), [mmur@uwo.ca](mailto:mmur@uwo.ca)

## 3. Course Description

### Description

This one-semester graduate course will provide you with an introduction to neural networks. You will learn the fundamentals of neural computation and explore how networks of neurons support brain information processing. You will be familiarized with mathematical approaches, computational science, and machine learning techniques. You will gain an in-depth knowledge of neural computations through weekly programming assignments.

### Learning outcomes

The course is designed to achieve three primary objectives:

1. You will have an intensive introduction to mathematical approaches to neural networks
2. You will learn to link neural computations to cognitive function
3. You will learn to model neural computations in a high-level language (Python)

### Topic outline and schedule

Refer to the course calendar for specific meeting dates and times. Activity and assignment details will be explained in detail within each week's corresponding learning module. If you have

any questions, please contact your instructor.

## Fundamental Topics

1. Mathematical models for neural and cognitive processes
2. Single-neuron models
3. Dynamics of neural networks
4. Random graph theory
5. Simple models for memory
6. Simple models for sensory processing
7. Dimensionality reduction techniques
8. Deep convolutional neural networks
9. Recurrent neural networks
10. Attractor network models

## Prerequisites

This course is open to graduate students and senior undergraduates. There are no formal prerequisites for the course. However, you are expected to have a strong foundation in applied mathematics and programming.

We provide an online self assessment that you can take prior to the start of the course to help you determine your level of background knowledge on the elementary topics listed above. If you do not have the background knowledge on these topics but are willing to learn, we can provide authorization to enroll in the course on a case-by-case basis. For those who would like to gain programming experience prior to the course, please consider taking a background course in scientific computing in the term before the course.

## 4. Course Materials

We will use the following textbooks: [\*Theoretical Neuroscience\*](#) by Dayan and Abbott and [\*Deep Learning\*](#) by Goodfellow, Bengio, and Courville. We will additionally assign recommended readings from primary literature when relevant for the coursework. We will also provide links to online resources for learning to program in Python. Readings and links will be posted on the [course website](#). Students are responsible for checking the course website on a regular basis for news and updates.

## 5. Methods of Evaluation

The overall course grade will be calculated as listed below:

Assignments	30%
Project	60%
Seminar participation	10%

The course will be graded according to programming assignments, a project, and seminar participation. Assignments need to be completed independently. The project will be performed in small groups and involves implementing a model of a neural system and presenting results in

class. The seminar serves to discuss readings from primary literature relevant to the course content.

## **6. Accommodation and Accessibility**

If you are unable to meet a course requirement due to illness or other serious circumstances, you must seek approval for the absence as soon as possible. Approval can be granted either through a self-reporting of absence or via the Dean's Office/Academic Counselling unit of your Home Faculty. If you are a Social Science student, the Academic Counselling Office of the Faculty of Social Science is located in SSC 2105, and can be contacted at [ssaco@uwo.ca](mailto:ssaco@uwo.ca). If you are a Science student, the Academic Counselling Office of the Faculty of Science is located in NCB 280, and can be contacted at [scibmsac@uwo.ca](mailto:scibmsac@uwo.ca). For further information, please consult the university's [policy on academic consideration for student absences](#).

### **Religious Accommodation**

When a course requirement conflicts with a religious holiday that requires an absence from the University or prohibits certain activities, students should request accommodation for their absence in writing at least two weeks prior to the holiday to the course instructor and/or the Academic Counselling office of their Faculty of Registration. Please consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays (updated annually) at <https://multiculturalcalendar.com/ecal/index.php?s=c-univwo>.

### **Accommodation Policies**

Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact Accessible Education, which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The policy on Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities can be found at: [https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/Academic\\_Accommodation\\_disabilities.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic_Accommodation_disabilities.pdf).

## **7. Academic Policies**

The website for Registrarial Services is <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>. In accordance with [policy](#), the centrally administered e-mail account provided to students will be considered the individual's official university email address. It is the responsibility of the account holder to ensure that email received from the University at their official university address is attended to in a timely manner.

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site: [http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf). We will clearly indicate the level of acceptable collaboration on assignments and projects.

All assignments and papers may be checked for textual similarity for detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference

database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service for papers is subject to the licensing agreement currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>). Programming assignments may be checked for similarity using MOSS (Measure of Software Similarity).

## 8. Support Services

Please visit the Science & Basic Medical Sciences Academic Counselling webpage for information on adding/dropping courses, academic considerations for absences, appeals, exam conflicts, and many other academic related matters: <https://www.uwo.ca/sci/counselling>.

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western ([http://www.health.uwo.ca/mental\\_health](http://www.health.uwo.ca/mental_health)) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at

[https://www.uwo.ca/health/student\\_support/survivor\\_support/get-help.html](https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html).

To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact [support@uwo.ca](mailto:support@uwo.ca).

Please contact the course instructor if you require lecture or printed material in an alternate format or if any other arrangements can make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Accessible Education at

[http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible\\_education/index.html](http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/index.html)

if you have any questions regarding accommodations.

Learning-skills counsellors at the Student Development Centre (<https://learning.uwo.ca>) are ready to help you improve your learning skills. They offer presentations on strategies for improving time management, multiple-choice exam preparation/writing, textbook reading, and more. Individual support is offered throughout the Fall/Winter terms in the drop-in Learning Help Centre, and year-round through individual counselling.

Western University is committed to a thriving campus as we deliver our courses in the mixed model of both virtual and face-to-face formats. We encourage you to check out the Digital Student Experience website to manage your academics and well-being: <https://www.uwo.ca/se/digital>. Additional student-run support services are offered by the USC, <https://westernusc.ca/services>.

## 9. Statements Concerning Online Etiquette

In courses involving online interactions, the Mathematics and Psychology Departments expect students to honour the following rules of etiquette:

- Please “arrive” to class on time
- Please use your computer and/or laptop if possible (as opposed to a cell phone or tablet)
- Please ensure that you are in a private location to protect the confidentiality of discussions in the event that a class discussion deals with sensitive or personal material
- To minimize background noise, kindly mute your microphone for the entire class until you are invited to speak, unless directed otherwise
- Unless the internet connection becomes unstable, please utilize the video camera to participate in the class discussions
- Unless invited by your instructor, do not share your screen in the meeting

The course instructor will act as moderator for the class and will deal with any questions from participants. To participate please consider the following:

- If you wish to speak, use the “raise hand” function and wait for the instructor to acknowledge you before beginning your comment or question.
- Please remember to unmute your microphone and turn on your video camera before speaking.
- Self-identify when speaking.
- Please remember to mute your mic and turn off your video camera after speaking (unless directed otherwise).

General considerations of “netiquette”:

- Keep in mind the different cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the students in the course.
- Be courteous toward the instructor, your colleagues, and authors whose work you are discussing.
- Be respectful of the diversity of viewpoints that you will encounter in the class and in your readings. The exchange of diverse ideas and opinions is part of the scholarly environment. “Flaming” is never appropriate.
- Be professional and scholarly in all online postings. Use proper grammar and spelling. Cite the ideas of others appropriately.

Note that disruptive behaviour of any type during online classes, including inappropriate use of the chat function, is unacceptable. Students found guilty of Zoom-bombing a class or of other serious online offenses may be subject to disciplinary measures under the Code of Student Conduct.