Title: "Learning to Observe in Sensation & Perception"
Speaker: Ben Balas, North Dakota State University

Abstract

Sensation & Perception content can be challenging material for instructors and students alike. Whether it is presented as a module in Intro Psych or a stand-alone upper-division course, striking a good balance between covering the relevant neuroanatomy, the functional properties of sensory systems, computational principles, and the history of key theories is difficult. The sheer amount of topics one might cover makes it easy to overwhelm students and requires instructors to make hard choices about what to prioritize. I suggest that focusing on structured observation as a key activity and a learning outcome is one way to present S&P material that is accessible, engaging, and effective. I'll describe how I've centered observation in classroom activities and my assessment strategies, with an emphasis on how to re-imagine the goals of teaching S&P.

Bio

Ben Balas received his SB (2002) and his PhD (2007) in Cognitive Science from MIT's Department of Brain and Cognitive Sciences. Following his PhD, he completed post-doctoral work at Children's Hospital Boston and MIT. His research focuses on visual recognition, with particular interests in visual development and the role of experience in shaping recognition abilities. In addition to his research publications, he is the author of the textbook "Practical Vision Science: Learning through Experimentation" (now available from Routledge) and writes regularly about the intersection of chess and cognitive science as a Top Blogger at chess.com.