In Memoriam: Richard F. Thompson

University Professor Emeritus Richard F. Thompson, William M. Keck Chair Emeritus in Psychology and Biological Sciences at USC Dornsife, a pioneer in the field of neuroscience, has died. He was 84. Thompson of Nipomo, California, died at home on Sept. 16 from natural causes. “He had a happy, exciting, and accomplished life and we were honored to have him as a loving husband, father and grandfather,” his family wrote in a statement.

In a career spanning more than half a century, Thompson made seminal contributions to the understanding of the neurobiological substrates of learning and memory. Regarded by many as the world’s leading authority in his field, he was the first neuroscientist to identify and map the neural circuits responsible for classical conditioning — or Pavlovian learning. USC Provost Elizabeth Garrett said the USC community has lost a world-renowned scholar and an inspiring mentor. “As he helped to set the trajectory for modern neuroscience, Dick’s curiosity and aptitude across many areas of the sciences and humanities allowed him to answer some of the most difficult questions related to human behavior,” Garrett said. USC Dornsife Dean Steve Kay called Thompson’s work on memory groundbreaking in improving the understanding of neurological processes. “His dedication both to his research and to the university helped raise the esteem of our Departments of Psychology and Biological Sciences,” Kay said.

Thompson’s research focused on identifying places in the brain where memories are stored for particular forms of classical conditioning, a fundamental form of learning. More generally, Thompson showed that the brain saves a memory by strengthening the synapses, or connections between neurons. Neurons also create new synapses during the learning process, which Thompson defined as the creation of memory. His work also looked at the effects of behavioral stress, estrogen and aging on learning.

Recognitions for Thompson’s scientific achievements include the Karl Spencer Lashley Award from the American Philosophical Society in 2007, and the American Psychological Foundation’s 2010 Gold Medal Award for Life Achievement in the Science of Psychology. Thompson held other honors, including a seat on the 24-member National Science Board and membership in the National Academy of Sciences, and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, as well as the American Philosophical Society.

The author of numerous books and editor of several others, Thompson published 450 research papers. He wrote his first book, Foundations of Physiological Psychology (Harper & Row), in 1967. The book has since become a classic in the field. His textbook, The Brain: A Neuroscience Primer (Third Edition, Worth Publishers, 2000), presents an overview of brain anatomy and physiology — from molecules to the mind. Memory: The Key to Consciousness (Joseph Henry Press, 2005), which Thompson wrote with longtime colleague Stephen Madigan, associate professor of psychology, focuses on cutting-edge research in behavioral science and neuroscience, exploring the mechanism of memory and learning. He served as chief editor of the journals Physiological Psychology and Journal of Comparative and Physiological Psychology and was chief editor and founder of Behavioral Neuroscience.

Thompson is survived by his wife of 54 years, Judith K. Thompson; his children Kathryn Thompson-Clancy, Elizabeth Collins and Virginia Thompson-DeWinter, and seven grandchildren.

Article by Susan Bell - USC Dornsife
• Dr. Gayla Margolin, Dr. Shri Narayanan and Dr. Donna Spruijt-Metz were awarded SC CTSI Pilot Funding (NIH/NCATS) for a project titled: “A Day in the Life”: Using Mobile Technology to Measure Romantic Partners’ Emotions, Vocalizations, and Physiology as Possible Indicators of Dating Aggression.”

• Dr. Thomas Lyon received the 2014 Outstanding Research Career Achievement Award from the American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children.

• Dr. Genevieve Dunton, Assistant Professor of Preventive Medicine and Psychology, and USC Norris Cancer Center member, was awarded a 2.5-million dollar grant from the National Heart Lung and Blood Institute to conduct a 4-year study, which will develop novel statistical models for Ecological Momentary Assessment studies of physical activity.

• Dr. Reout Arbel, visiting scholar from Haifa University, received an International Postdoctoral Fellowship for the 2014-15 academic year to study bio-social processes in couples and families with Dr. Margolin.

• Sohyun Han (Gayla Margolin) received a 2014 National Science Graduate Research Fellowship Program (GRFP) Fellowship for a project titled ”Vocally encoded emotion in romantic partner discussions: Links with physiology, behavior, and early adversity”

• Justin Hummer (Gerald Davison) received a 2014 National Science Graduate Research Fellowship Program (GRFP) Fellowship for a project titled “Change mechanisms in personalized normative feedback in the prevention of alcohol abuse among college students”

• Aubrey Rodriguez (Gayla Margolin) received the 2014 American Psychological Foundation Randy Gerson Memorial Grant for her proposal titled “Temporary Parental Absence due to Military Deployment: Emotion Process and Mental Health."


MARK YOUR CALENDARS

10/01 Psi Chi Graduate School Panel, 6pm, GFS 207
10/02 GC3 Repeated Measures Analysis in SPSS, 1pm, SGM 718
10/06 Social Psychology Brown Bag Series, 12pm, ACB 238
10/08 Undergraduate Research Opportunities Faire, 11am-2pm, SGM 5th floor
10/09 GC3 Baby Steps to Learn R for SPSS Users, 1pm, SGM 718
10/13 Social Psychology Brown Bag Series, 12pm, ACB 238
10/15 Faculty Meeting, 12-2pm, SGM 514
10/16 GC3 Using R for Data Analysis, 1pm, SGM 718
10/18 Homecoming Tailgate, Trousdale Parkway
10/20 Social Psychology Brown Bag Series, 12pm, ACB 238
10/23 GC3 Time Series Analysis for Psychological Data, 1pm, SGM 718
10/27 Social Psychology Brown Bag Series, 12pm, ACB 238
10/29 Big Data and Human Behavior Series, 12pm, BCI
10/30 GC3 Inter-Rater Reliability in SPSS, 1pm, SGM 718

Remember to check the department calendar on the website for more details!

Graduate Student Poster Party

Wednesday September 24th, was another successful graduate student poster party. The poster party is an annual event where graduate students present on their second year projects as faculty and other graduate students gather to talk about research, and of course, to eat pizza!

If you have submissions for the Department of Psychology Newsletter, please email Daniel Paris <dparis@usc.edu>. 
Have You Read Anything Good Lately?


Psi Chi Honors Society

This September, the USC Psi Chi Chapter celebrated their 75th anniversary! The picture on the right, taken September 9th, was the first Psi Chi event of the fall semester. Undergraduates, from freshman to seniors are invited to participate in workshops, panel discussions, academic lectures, charity events, and social gatherings throughout the year to gain a better understanding of psychology as a field, what graduate school and career opportunities are available, and to network with faculty and peers. Over 100 students joined Psi Chi last year.

Graduate Consultation and Computer Center (GC3)

The Graduate Consultation & Computer Center (GC3) located on the 7th floor of SGM (Room 718) is celebrating the start of its 3rd year! Formed in the fall of 2012 as an in-house center for statistical expertise, the GC3 serves three core functions: 1) to provide one-on-one consultation in research methodology and statistics for faculty, staff, and doctoral students; 2) to promote knowledge of data management, statistics, and computing; 3) and to serve as a space for accessing resources and fostering discussion of statistical methodology.

**Provide one-on-one consultation.** Staffed by graduate student TAs with expertise in applied statistics, the GC3 provides FREE statistical consulting for all faculty, staff, and doctoral students in psychology (and affiliates). Walk-ins are welcome during our open office hours (listed on our website [dornsife.usc.edu/psyc/gc3](http://dornsife.usc.edu/psyc/gc3)) or an appointment can be made by emailing psycgc3@gmail.com.

**Promote knowledge.** The GC3 Lecture Series was started in the Fall of 2013 to help promote statistical knowledge in the department by providing informational lectures and workshops on statistical methodology and data analysis. Since then, the GC3 has hosted 4 invited speakers and held over 25 lectures on topics ranging in complexity from basic analysis to statistical simulations. Don’t miss out on our 3 part series on Statistical (machine) Learning starting November 13th. The lecture series is held every Thursday @1pm in the GC3. More information on the GC3 Lecture Series can be found at our website [dornsife.usc.edu/psyc/GC3-lectures](http://dornsife.usc.edu/psyc/GC3-lectures).

**To serve as a space.** The GC3 provides computers that contain a variety of statistical software that are available to all members of the department. Software includes Mplus, Stata, SPSS/AMOS, SAS, R, Minitab, Matab, HLM7, Lisrel, Winsteps, Comprehensive Meta Analysis and more! In addition, the GC3 is a workspace designed to foster collaboration. Feel free to bring your own computer and work at one of our desks individually or as a small team.