

The Sensory World

Biology of sensory functions in humans and other animals

Course #	20SSW
Format:	Seminar
Moderator(s):	Gordon Wyse, Larry Ambs
Date and Time:	Wednesday, 10:00- Noon 10 weeks, starting Feb. 26, 2020
Location:	Wesley United Methodist Church, Hadley
Maximum number of participants:	18
Auditors accepted:	Yes, up to 2

Purpose: We will study examples of sensory functions: how sensory receptors work, how sensory information is processed in nervous systems, and behavioral and perceptual roles of sensory systems in humans and other animals.

Description: Aristotle said, "Nothing is in the mind that did not come in through the senses." Whether or not this is strictly true, it highlights the important roles that senses play in human and animal behavior. The seminar will consider various sensory modalities (vision, hearing, balance, olfaction, taste, etc.), how sensory stimuli activate receptor cells, and how sensory information is processed in nervous systems to regulate behavior. Examples will include visual recognition, color vision, pattern recognition, hearing of speech and music, sensory deficiencies, and the sensory basis of animal navigation.

Role of participants: Participants will research a topic and give a presentation of approx. 30 minutes on it. They will lead discussion of their topic, as well as contribute to the discussion of other topics. A list of topics will be available at the Preview and will be distributed to seminar members.

Resources: We will either require or recommend a recent book, *Our Senses*, by Rob DeSalle (2018). We will also have a broad list of other readings.

About the Moderators: Gordon Wyse taught neurobiology and sensory physiology at UMass before retiring eleven years ago. He has led seminars in life sciences and in history. Larry Ambs is a retired UMass engineering professor. He has led numerous seminars on a wide variety of topics including the sciences, history and political sciences.