Towards a model-based neuroscience of how we represent other people

Thinking about other people relies on complex and imprecise representations of individuals and social groups. It also requires that we update those representations in light of new information, integrate multiple sources of information, and efficiently deploy all of this to guide our interactions. Social psychology has long investigated the processes involved, and social neuroscience has begun to identify their neural correlates. Still missing, however, is a comprehensive, theoretically-informed, and mechanistic understanding of the specific neural computations that constitute such social processes. My research starts with theoretical constructs of person representation from psychology (e.g. trait learning, implicit evaluations, theory of mind), and reconstrues them within the model-based framework of computational neuroscience. Its long-term goal is the construction of a comprehensive model of the neural computations underlying person representation, including modulation by complex factors such as emotional or attentional states. In this talk I will present data on the influence of race bias on trust judgments and decisions, as well as the computational processes through which we learn about individuals’ traits and intentions (i.e., theory of mind), and how these processes might be disrupted in individuals with social impairments (e.g. Autism Spectrum Disorder).

Thursday, January 14, 4 pm
Refreshments served at 3:45
108 West Village G