The Psychology Department in the College of Science presents a colloquium by

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How Cognitive Abilities Promote Well-Being: Attentional Control, Emotion Regulation, and Their Consequences

The intersection of cognition and emotion, a developing domain of psychological inquiry, has vital theoretical and clinical implications. In particular, attention is critical in this regard because it serves as the gatekeeper of incoming information that gives rise to emotion. Attentional control (AC) is the ability to ignore task-irrelevant information, and we know that AC deficits are associated with chronically elevated negative emotions such as anxiety. The boundary conditions and causal directions of this association, however, are not fully understood. This talk explores three research questions that I have investigated using psychophysiological, behavioral, and self-reported measures:

1. Under what circumstances do persistent negative mood and transient negative emotion facilitate, rather than disrupt, AC? I present two studies in which threat stimuli improved subsequent AC during anxious mood.
2. Do AC deficits contribute to anxiety rather than follow as consequences of it? I present several studies showing that AC deficits are anxiety contributors, including work involving interventional training of AC.
3. How does cognition influence emotion through the flexible regulation of affective states? I present research suggesting that people use internal bodily feedback (e.g., facial corrugator activation, heart rate deceleration) to make strategic decisions during emotion regulation. Furthermore, individual differences in this responsiveness to internal feedback were related to satisfaction with life. The findings from these studies collectively suggest that AC and responsiveness to internal feedback have important implications for well-being.

Tuesday, January 24, 2016 at 4pm
Refreshments served at 3:45
335 Shillman Hall