C&P Proseminar – Final Paper

Option #1

One theme of this course has been to contrast two broad approaches to cognition that (typically) take opposing views on the following set of issues:

- **Cognitive Representation:** Abstract, symbolic vs. modal, non-symbolic, associationist
- **Architecture:** Modular systems vs. interactive systems
- **Origins:** Nativism vs. empiricism
- **Learning:** Multiple specialized mechanisms vs. domain-general learning mechanism
- **Embodiment:** Cognitive systems described independently of perception/action vs. Cognitive systems as integrated with perception/action

For the final paper, select one domain in which these approaches have been contrasted (e.g., perception, categories/concepts, spatial cognition, or language).

1) Discuss both views within your chosen domain, with particular attention to why certain claims tend to go together (e.g., why empiricist approaches typically assume an interactive architecture).

2) Argue, with empirical evidence as support, which approach is most likely to be correct. Note that it is perfectly acceptable to argue, e.g., that neither approach is useful, or that a hybrid approach is to be preferred.

Option #2

A second theme of the course has been the relationship between perceptual processing and higher-level forms of cognition. Choose one perceptual domain (e.g., color perception, visual object recognition, speech perception) on which to focus.

1) How does one draw a principled distinction between perception and higher-level forms of cognition?

2) Mechanistically, what types of processes would qualify as the modulation of perceptual operations by higher-level cognition?

3) What is the state of the extant evidence regarding whether these mechanisms exist and are functional?

The paper should be no longer than 12 pages double-spaced. It is due by Friday of finals week (Dec 16th) at 5 pm by email.