FAQ for prospective students

Q: Should I apply through the Department of Psychology or the Program in Neuroscience?

A: This depends on a few factors. One is whether you are more focused on psychology vs. neuroscience. You can do a mix of both either way, but your course requirements and the people you interact with on a regular basis will be different. Another factor is that I have more control over who is admitted to the Department of Psychology (students are admitted directly into a lab) compared to the Program in Neuroscience, where admissions are made by a committee and students don't join a lab until their 2nd year typically.

Q: What kind of mentor are you?

A: I believe that there isn't a one-size-fits-all style of mentorship. I've learned that the best way to mentor is to first get a sense of what a student's needs and desires are. That being said, there are a few constants:
- I meet with everyone in my lab individually for 1 hour each week. This is dedicated time to talk about anything. Meetings always end with action items for the next week.
- Students can expect prompt replies from me over email (I expect the same from students). One of my main goals is to be a facilitator of research rather than a bottleneck.
- I encourage students to develop their own ideas rather than to implement my ideas, but I'm also happy to suggest ideas to students.

Q: What are your views on open science?

A: I strongly support open science practices. All code and data generated by my lab is expected to be shared publicly. I've compiled some guidance here: https://gershmanlab.com/docs/Sharing.pdf

Q: What is it like to be in your lab?

A: I highly recommend contacting current or former grad students in my lab to hear their experiences. Generally speaking, I try to foster a lab environment in which people support one another (both personally and scientifically), collaboration is common (have a look at the lab's publications for evidence of this), and students are exposed to interdisciplinary ideas (people in my lab have come from psychology, neuroscience, physics, economics, and computer science backgrounds). I share a lab space with Tomer Ullman, so people in our labs interact frequently. I also have many collaborations with labs in Psychology, Neurobiology, Molecular & Cellular Biology, Economics, and Computer Science.

Q: What kind of background do I need to work in your lab?

A: Because my interests are so diverse, there is no universal background requirement. In general it is good to have strong math and programming skills, but some of these skills you can pick up during grad school (I never took a computer science course prior to entering grad school). Some knowledge of probability, machine learning, statistics, and information theory are helpful.