As members of a social species, we must evaluate the actions, intentions, and affiliations of the people around us, to identify potential allies and potential foes and to adopt appropriate interaction strategies with different individuals. In this talk, Wynn will present evidence that these capacities are vigorously operative even in young human infants. Within the first few months of life, we are already evaluating others by their social behaviors, affiliations, conflicts, and connections to ourselves and to each other. These assessments ground attitudes and behaviors that are adaptive to ourselves and beneficial to society, but they also generate systematic biases that can have negative consequences.

Karen Wynn, Professor of Psychology and Cognitive Science at Yale University

February 20, 3:30–5:00
Jesse Wrench Auditorium, S107
Memorial Union, University Ave. & Hitt St.
Free and open to the public

Wynn received her PhD in cognitive science from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and was on faculty at the University of Arizona from 1990 until 1999, when she joined the Department of Psychology at Yale University. Her research investigates core domains of human cognition including the early foundations of numerical competence, infants’ understanding of the physical world, and early theory of mind. Her recent work focuses on infants’ and young children’s understanding of the social world. She received the National Academy of Sciences Troland Research Award in 2001, the APA’s Distinguished Scientific Award for Early Career Contribution to Psychology in 2000, and a James McKeen Cattell Foundation Sabbatical Award. She is a fellow of the Association for Psychological Science. Her research is funded by the NSF and by the NIH.

For more information, please visit events.psych.missouri.edu/lecture-series/