



# JUSTIN AND PIERRE, HILLARY AND BILL: ASSOCIATIVE INTERFERENCE AND ITS RESOLUTION

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**3:00 – 4:30pm**

**BSP 319N**



When two heads of state share the same last name, we face a memory challenge from associative interference. How do we keep associations sharing an item straight, and effectively remember both in their own right? I will show how the well known classic result, associative independence - which suggested associative interference may never be challenging - and never felt intuitive - and was always the wrong interpretation of the data - turns out to be not so wrong for word pairs. However, the boundary conditions are severe: on the one hand, associative competition can be unambiguously produced under the right conditions, and on the other, it can be easily reversed strategically. Associative ambiguity is everywhere. Reassuringly, this ambiguity does pose a non-trivial challenge to memory, but also reassuringly, humans appear to be experts at neutralizing or even hijacking that ambiguity in the service of relational memory.

