James S. McDonnell Department of Genetics

The Department of Genetics (http://genetics.wustl.edu) is at the forefront of the rapidly developing field known as genomic (or personalized) medicine, in which genetic and epigenetic analysis coupled with clinical information enables treatments to be tailored specifically to the individual patient. The rapid evolution of sequencing technologies, genome engineering, automated cellular imaging and mass spectrometry methods to rapidly perform proteomic and metabolomics studies, coupled with powerful computational tools, is revolutionizing the biological sciences. Investigators in the department are developing new methods of genomic analysis — including technology and software, epigenomics and copy number variation as well as studies of disease pathways using model organisms — to identify and study the genes responsible for human disease and treatment responses.

The department supports a broad program of preclinical and graduate instruction in genetics, with research opportunities that include studies of transcriptional networks, population genetics, protein evolution, neurological disorders, developmental genetics, models of human disease, genome architecture, statistical genetics and computational biology, genome technologies and infertility.

A significant portion of the first-year course in basic medical sciences is devoted to human and clinical genetics, with emphasis on how genomic information will transform the practice of medicine. This includes specialized selective courses in addition to the core genetic curriculum. Advanced training in clinical genetics and in genetic research is available from the faculty in the Department of Genetics and from geneticists with principal appointments in many other departments within the School of Medicine (http://medicine.wustl.edu).

Advanced courses and seminars are offered that focus on the genetics of complex disease, gene expression, genome engineering, induced pluripotent stem cells, single-cell genomics, molecular genetics, genetic epidemiology, computational biology, developmental genetics, microbial genetics, cancer genetics, and population and evolutionary genetics. Extraordinary opportunities for research training and experience are available in all of these areas and at all levels. The programs are tailored to meet the needs of medical students, graduate students, and both MD and PhD postdoctoral fellows pursuing advanced training in biomedical research.

Website: http://genetics.wustl.edu

Degrees & Requirements

Although the Department of Genetics does not offer its own degree, some of the department's courses are open to students in the MD and MSTP (MD/PhD) programs. Further information about the MD and MSTP degrees can be found in the Degrees & Programs (http://bulletin.wustl.edu/medicine/degrees) section of this Bulletin.

Research

M20 Genetics 900
Cross-listed with L41 Biol 590

Barak Cohen, PhD
Couch Biomedical Research Building, Room 4308
Phone: 314-362-3674
cohen@wustl.edu
Functional genomics in yeast; gene regulatory networks, complex trait genetics, and synthetic biology studies of cis-regulation.

Joseph Dougherty, PhD
Couch Biomedical Research Building, Room 6316
Phone: 314-286-0752
jdougherty@wustl.edu
Our laboratory utilizes a variety of techniques spanning from human molecular genetics and informatics to mouse behavioral neuroscience and neuroanatomy. We develop and employ mouse models of psychiatric disorders, particularly those that mimic genetic variations that we have identified in human patient populations, with the goal of trying to understand the cellular and molecular underpinnings of these disorders.

Susan K. Dutcher, PhD
Couch Biomedical Research Building, Room 5301
Phone: 314-362-2765
dutcher@wustl.edu
Studies of the role of centrioles and basal bodies in ciliary signaling, assembly, and motility using molecular genetics and computational and biochemical approaches.

Heather Lawson, PhD
Couch Biomedical Research Building, Room 6312
Phone: 314-362-7269
lawson@wustl.edu
Our lab focuses on translating genetic and epigenetic molecular and analytical observations to physiological endpoints. We apply several complementary and integrated approaches, including bench science, cultured cells, mouse phenotyping and husbandry, and computational and systems biology.
Jeffrey Milbrandt, MD, PhD
Couch Biomedical Research Building, Room 6306
Phone: 314-362-4651
jmilbrandt@wustl.edu

We are performing Cas9/CRISPR activation and repression screens in iPSC-derived neurons together with single-cell transcriptomics analysis to evaluate the causal effects of genetic variants associated with neuropsychiatric diseases. We are also studying how metabolism influences the axonal/glial interactions important for proper nerve function. We use genetic and metabolomic analysis to identify molecular mechanisms of axonal degeneration, a self-destructive process that plays an important role in many neurodegenerative conditions.

Rob Mitra, PhD
Couch Biomedical Research Building, Room 4301
Phone: 314-362-2751
mitra@wustl.edu

Our focus is on systems biology, gene regulation and technology development. Projects in the lab fall into three general categories: (1) understanding the molecular logic of transcription factor cooperativity; (2) mapping the gene regulatory networks that control developmental processes and using this knowledge to reprogram fibroblasts into useful cell types; and (3) developing novel technologies to more efficiently achieve the first two aims.

Samantha Morris, PhD
Couch Biomedical Research Building, Room 3316
Phone: 314-747-8618
s.morris@wustl.edu

This lab strives to engineer cell fate to generate clinically valuable cell populations via stem cell and developmental biology. Our research focuses on dissecting the gene regulatory networks that define cell identity, using the developing embryo and tissue regeneration as a guide to engineer fate in vitro. We apply insight from these analyses to generate clinically relevant populations by differentiating cells from a pluripotent state or by directly converting cells between mature fates. We employ a combination of computational, single-cell transcriptomics with cell and developmental biology approaches.

Zachary Pincus, PhD
Couch Biomedical Research Building, Room 5304
Phone: 314-747-5520
zpincus@wustl.edu

Interindividual variability in aging and lifespan; developmental origins of longevity and adult health; quantitative microscope and image analysis of C. elegans.

Michael A. Province, PhD
Farrell Learning and Teaching Center (FLTC), 6th floor, Suite 605
Phone: 314-362-3616
mprovince@wustl.edu

Development and evaluation of novel statistical genetics methodology, especially as applied to genomic identification and validation of variants for human complex quantitative traits, such as heart disease, cancer, pulmonary function, diabetes and human longevity.

Nancy L. Saccone, PhD
Farrell Learning and Teaching Center (FLTC), 6th floor, Suite 606
Phone: 314-747-3263
nlism@wustl.edu (nlims@wustl.edu)

Statistical genetics and psychiatric genetics; development and application of analysis methods for studying the genetics of human disease and complex traits.

Tim Schedl, PhD
Couch Biomedical Research Building, Room 5305
Phone: 314-362-6162
ts@wustl.edu

Our lab studies germ cell development in the model organism Caenorhabditis elegans. The major focuses are control of the decision to proliferate or enter the meiotic pathway, control and coordination of meiotic prophase progression and gametogenesis, and control of meiotic maturation and ovulation.

James Skeath, PhD
Couch Biomedical Research Building, Room 6315
Phone: 314-362-0535
jskeath@wustl.edu

Identification of the genes and the elucidation of the molecular mechanisms that regulate the early events of Drosophila central neurogenesis; illumination of the mechanisms that form, pattern and specify the individual identities of the progenitor cells of the Drosophila embryonic central nervous system.

Gary D. Stormo, PhD
Couch Biomedical Research Building, Room 4208
Phone: 314-747-5534
stormo@wustl.edu

Computational biology of protein-DNA interactions, RNA folding, gene and promoter finding; biochemical analysis of DNA-protein interactions and gene regulation.
Ting Wang, PhD
Couch Biomedical Research Building, Room 5211
Phone: 314-286-0865
twang@wustl.edu

We work in the general field of computational genomics and epigenomics. We study the evolution of human regulatory networks, with a focus on mobile elements (or transposable elements) and their impact on gene regulation, their genetic and epigenetic control, and their roles in human biology and diseases.

Faculty

Department Head
Jeffrey D. Milbrandt, MD, PhD

Executive Director, McDonnell Genome Institute
Jeffrey D. Milbrandt, MD, PhD

Director, Division of Statistical Genomics
Michael Province, PhD

Director, Genome Technology Access Center
Rich Head, MS

Director, Genome Engineering and iPSC Center
Xiaoxia Cui, PhD

Visit our website for more information about our faculty (http://genetics.wustl.edu/faculty) and their appointments.

B

Ruteja A. Barve, MS, PHD
Instructor in Genetics (primary appointment)
MS Washington Univ in St. Louis 2008
BS University of Pune 1995
PHD Washington Univ in St. Louis 2014

John Rutledge Bermingham Jr, PHD
Associate Professor of Genetics (primary appointment)
PHD University of Colorado Boulder 2016
BS Yale University 2016

Adam J. Bloom, PHD
Assistant Professor of Genetics (primary appointment)
Assistant Professor of Anesthesiology
PHD Washington Univ in St. Louis 2006
BS University of CA Berkeley 1997

Ingrid B Borecki, MS, PHD
Adjunct Professor of Genetics (primary appointment)
BS University of Illinois 1977
MS University of Hawaii 1980
PHD University of Hawaii 1981

William James Buchser, PHD, B MUS
Assistant Professor of Genetics (primary appointment)
PHD University of Miami 2009
B MUS University of Miami 2002

C

Paul F Cliften, PHD, MS
Associate Professor of Genetics (primary appointment)
BS Utah St University 1992
PHD University of California 1999
MS Utah St University 1995

Barak Alon Cohen, PHD
Professor of Genetics (primary appointment)
Alvin Goldfarb Distinguished Professor of Computational Biology
BS Cornell University 1992
PHD Harvard University 1998

Donald Franklin Conrad, MS, PHD
Adjunct Associate Professor of Genetics (primary appointment)
BS Dartmouth College 1999
MS Stanford University 2017
PHD University of Chicago 2007

Seth Daniel Crosby, MD
Assistant Professor of Genetics (primary appointment)
BS University of California 1984
MD University Texas San Antonio 1989

Xiaoxia Cui, MS, PHD
Assistant Professor of Genetics (primary appointment)
MS University of Alabama 2017
PHD University of Texas Austin 2017
BS Nanjing University 2017

D

Joseph D Dougherty, PHD
Associate Professor of Genetics (primary appointment)
Associate Professor of Psychiatry
BS Truman State University 1999
PHD University of California 2005

Susan K. Dutcher, PHD
Professor of Genetics (primary appointment)
Professor of Cell Biology and Physiology
BA Colorado College 1974
PHD University of Washington 1980

F

Justin C. Fay, PHD
Adjunct Associate Professor of Genetics (primary appointment)
PHD University of Chicago 2001

H
Richard D Head, MS
Professor of Genetics (primary appointment)
Professor of Pathology and Immunology
MS Southern Illinois University 1992

K
Sungsu Kim, MS, PHD
Instructor in Genetics (primary appointment)
MS Korea University 2002
PHD Washington Univ in St. Louis 2010
BS Korea University 2000

L
Haluk Lacin, PHD
Instructor in Genetics (primary appointment)
PHD Washington Univ in St. Louis 2010
BS Bogazici University 2003

Heather A Lawson, MA, PHD
Assistant Professor of Genetics (primary appointment)
BA Univ of Wisconsin Milwaukee 2002
MA Pennsylvania State University 2004
PHD Pennsylvania State University 2008

M
Xianrong Mao, MS, PHD
Instructor in Genetics (primary appointment)
BS Lanzhou University 1993
MS Chinese Academy of Sciences 1996
PHD University of Arkansas 2001

James P Mc Carter, MD, PHD
Adjunct Professor of Genetics (primary appointment)
BA Princeton University 1989
MD Washington Univ in St. Louis 1998
PHD Washington Univ in St. Louis 1998

Jeffrey D Milbrandt, MD, PHD
James S McDonnell Professor of Genetics (primary appointment)
Executive Director of the McDonnell Genome Institute
Head of the Department of Genetics
Professor of Medicine
Professor of Neurology
Professor of Pathology and Immunology
MD Washington Univ in St. Louis 1978
BS Univ of Nebraska at Kearney 1974
PHD University of Virginia 1983

Robi D. Mitra, PHD
Professor of Genetics (primary appointment)
Alvin Goldfarb Distinguished Professor of Computational Biology
PHD Mass Inst of Technology (MIT) 2000

P
Zachary Scott Pincus, PHD
Assistant Professor of Genetics (primary appointment)
Assistant Professor of Developmental Biology
BS Stanford University 2002
PHD Stanford University 2007

Michael A Province, PHD, MA
Professor of Genetics (primary appointment)
Professor of Biostatistics
BA University of Dallas 1973
PHD Washington Univ in St. Louis 1987
MA Washington Univ in St. Louis 1979

S
Nancy L. Saccone, PHD, MS
Associate Professor of Genetics (primary appointment)
Associate Professor of Biostatistics
PHD Brown University 1993
MS Brown University 1990
BA University of California 1988

Yo Sasaki, PHD, MS
Associate Professor of Genetics (primary appointment)
BS Tokyo U of Agric & Technology 1991
PHD Gunma University, Med School 1997
MS Tokyo U of Agric & Technology 1994

Tim B Schedl, PHD
Professor of Genetics (primary appointment)
PHD Univ of Wisconsin Madison 1984
BA Lawrence University 1977

James B Skeath, PHD
Professor of Genetics (primary appointment)
BA Haverford College 1988
PHD Univ of Wisconsin Madison 1993

Gary D Stormo, MA, PHD
Professor of Genetics (primary appointment)
Joseph Erlanger Professor
Professor of Biomedical Engineering
Professor of Computer Science
BS California Institute Technolo 1972
MA University of Colorado Boulder 1975
PHD University of Colorado Boulder 1981

W
Ting Wang, MS, PHD
Professor of Genetics (primary appointment)
Professor of Biostatistics
Professor of Computer Science and Engineering
Sanford and Karen Loewenthal Distinguished Professor of Medicine
MS Washington Univ in St. Louis 2001
PHD Washington Univ in St. Louis 2006
BS School Not Listed 1997

Michael Aaron White, PHD, MS
Assistant Professor of Genetics (primary appointment)
PHD University of Rochester 2006
MS University of Rochester 2004
BA Brigham Young University 2000

Mary Kaye Wojczynski, PHD
Assistant Professor of Genetics (primary appointment)
PHD Emory University 2006

Jinsheng Yu, MS, MD, PHD
Instructor in Genetics (primary appointment)
BS Tongji University 1984
MS Tongji University 1995
MD Tongji University 1998
PHD Tongji University 1998

Jian Zhu, PHD
Instructor in Genetics (primary appointment)
Instructor in Medicine
PHD Oklahoma St University 2004

Courses

Visit online course listings to view offerings for M20 Genetics

M20 Genetics 511 Medical Genetics
Medical genetics is both a science and a clinical area or specialty of medicine, and the boundary between research and clinical application is increasingly blurred. The pace at which genomic and epigenomic tools are being developed is unprecedented. These tools result in continual conceptual advancements, which inevitably affect how we approach the study of disease risk, diagnosis, and management in all areas of medicine, not just medical genetics. We are moving into a time when the interpretable data from the examination of individual genomes will be incorporated into all other clinical data to assess individual risks and to guide clinical management and decision making. This course is intended as the first step toward life-long training in medical genetics and genomics. The course begins with a number of sessions devoted to basic principles of genetics. Drawing on this foundation, we move on to discuss genomic and epigenomic tools, to learn from leaders in their fields about the big questions in genetics and genomics (e.g., microbiome research, cancer genomics, current clinical uses of exome sequencing), and to discover how the tools are being used to answer these questions. Students are exposed to the use of genetic and genomic databases and information resources, which will allow them to keep up with new information and to critically appraise its validity and clinical utility. We begin to discuss the implication of this shift to the “genomic era,” particularly regarding ethical aspects, regulatory aspects, equal access, healthcare costs, and patient education. Clinical geneticists actively participate in the course and use a series of genetic disorders to help students apply their knowledge, focusing mainly on genetic etiology, pattern of inheritance, inheritance risk, and molecular diagnostic testing. Frequent patient interviews further enhance the exposure to clinical genetics. Overall, the course aims to enhance genetic and genomic literacy, which is an essential first step in preparing students to participate in the multidisciplinary teams that effectively make cutting-edge genetic and genomic research results accessible to patients. This course is cross-listed with L41 Biol 550.
Credit 34 units.