



**HEATHER WHITTAKER**, Class of 2024

Education: BSc (Biopsychology), University of Winnipeg, MSc (Clinical Neuroscience), University College London

Supervisor(s): Robert Zatorre, Lesley Fellows

Dpt: Neurology and Neurosurgery

Work location: Cognitive Neuroscience Unit, The Neuro (Montreal Neurological Institute-Hospital)

Project: Information-based neuromodulation with cognitive training to enhance working memory

Selected Award(s): Vanier Scholarship

Research Description:

My PhD project examines the effect of non-invasive brain stimulation on memory processes as a therapeutic approach for people with cognitive decline. I'm looking at the role of brain oscillations within distributed networks supporting auditory working memory, using rhythmic transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS) and electroencephalography (EEG).

Why did you decide to pursue both MDCM and PhD degrees? What are your career aspirations?

As a physician scientist in training, I hope to contribute to exciting developments in the field of brain rehabilitation for neurological or psychiatric illness. The McGill MDCM & PhD Program provides the most supportive environment for learning to navigate the interface between science and medicine, between researching a disease and caring for those living with it.

Why did you choose to study at McGill University?

I was drawn to the McGill because it is a globally respected epicentre for cutting-edge neuroscience research and care. Also Montreal is an incredible city to study and live in for 8 years!

What aspect of the MD-PhD program do you enjoy the most or are looking forward to?

Our biweekly seminar series is so valuable for career development and fostering a real sense of community within the program.

What advice do you have for incoming MDCM-PhD students?

Take plenty of time to develop your academic identity and be open to profound personal and professional growth during your training.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

Long walks along the Lachine Canal with my dog, dancing, knitting, surfing, skiing, and most recently learning to make stained glass!