Science & Technology

Study Hall: Summer 2019

Research briefs.

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Trade war, what is it good for?

The Trump administration’s trade policies are costing US consumers $1.4 billion per month, dwarfing any benefits to American manufacturers and exporters, according to research by Columbia economist David Weinstein ’73BUS and colleagues from Princeton and the Federal Reserve Bank of New York.

Weight-loss warning

Women with a history of “yo-yo dieting” — a pattern of losing weight and then regaining it — are at higher risk of heart disease, Columbia medical researcher Brooke Aggarwal ’08TC has found.

Popularity contest

By evaluating dozens of twentieth-century abstract painters’ critical reviews, press exposure, and social circles, Columbia Business School professor Paul Ingram and Mitali Banerjee ’17BUS have determined that, even in the pre-digital age, an artist’s fame was determined less by his creativity than by the number of powerful friends he had.

Gun-law lowdown

US states with weak gun laws and high levels of gun ownership have more mass shootings, according to new research by Columbia epidemiologist Charles Branas and doctoral student Paul Reeping. The study examined two decades’ worth of data.

A browner shade of green

While some climate scientists have hypothesized that rising levels of atmospheric CO2 could make the earth’s forests greener — since plants use CO2 for photosynthesis — a team of climatologists led by Columbia’s Pierre Gentine now predicts the opposite result. Gentine warns that warming temperatures will, on the whole, cause forests to wither.

Transgender seniors

Older transgender adults benefit from surgery and drugs that align their bodies with their gender identities even more than younger people do, according to research by Xiang Cai of Columbia's Mailman School of Public Health. Cai found that people over the age of sixty who undergo gender-affirming procedures are eight times likelier to be happy with their lives afterward, whereas younger people are twice as likely to be happy following treatment.

Giving voice

Columbia neuroscientists led by Nima Mesgarani have created a brain-monitoring system that can translate rudimentary thoughts into speech; they hope it will eventually enable people who have lost their ability to talk to communicate with others.



Guide to school abbreviations

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