MANDANA SAMIEI

Montréal, Canada | mandanasmi.github.io | samieima@mila.quebec | GitHub | Google Scholar | LinkedIn

RESEARCH FOCUS

My research focuses on how agents form abstractions, reason, and adapt continually. I aim to develop agentic systems capable of scientific exploration, robust to mode collapse and shallow chain-of-thought, with the goal of achieving structured and systematic reasoning.

EDUCATION

Ph.D. – McGill University & Mila - Québec AI Institute   Montreal, Canada
Advised by Prof. Blake A. Richards & Prof. Doina Precup   *2020 – Present*
Anticipated graduation date: Dec 2026 or earlier

M.Sc. – Concordia University   Montreal, Canada
Advised by Prof. Thomas Fevens   *2017 – 2019*
Thesis: Meta-Learning for Cancer Phenotype Prediction from Gene Expression Data [pdf]

B.Sc. – Shahid Beheshti University   Tehran, Iran
Advised by Prof. Mona Ghassemian   *2012 – 2016*

SELECTED RESEARCH PUBLICATIONS

Presenters are shwon in <u>underline</u>. Equal contribution is shwon in *.

1. **Local Inconsistency Resolution: The Interplay between Attention and Control in Probabilistic Models.** Oliver Richardson, Abdessamad Kabid, **Mandana Samiei**, Mehran Shakerinava, Joseph Viviano, Ali Parviz, Yoshua Bengio. Accepted as a <u>spotlight</u> at the twenty-ninth annual conference on artificial intelligence and statistics (aistats) 2026.

2. **Learning Schemas in Reinforcement Learning: bottleneck structure discovery.**
   Mandana Samiei, Doina Precup, Blake A. Richards.
   Under submission at Nature Communications, 2026.

3. **Adaptivity beyond no-forgetting: an analysis of continual learning objectives**
   Giulia Lanzillotta*, **Mandana Samiei***, Claire Vernade, Razvan Pascanu.
   Manuscript under submission to TMLR, 2026.

4. **Language Agents Mirror Human Causal Reasoning Biases. How Can We Help Them Think Like Scientists?** <u>Anthony GX Chen</u> , Dongyan Lin*, <u>**Mandana Samiei**</u>*, Doina Precup, Blake A. Richards, Rob Fergus, Kenneth Marino. Second conference on Language Modeling (COLM), 2025. [pdf]

5. **The Schema Spectrum: Explicit, Implicit, and Emergent Structures in AI and the Brain.**
   Mandana Samiei, Doina Precup, Blake A. Richards. Under review at Neuron, 2025. [pdf]

6. **The Role of Schemas in Reinforcement Learning: Implications for Generalization.**
   <u>**Mandana Samiei**</u>, Doina Precup, Blake A. Richards. Conference on Reinforcement Learning and Decision Making (RLDM), 2025. [pdf]

7. **AIF-GEN: Open-Source Platform and Synthetic Dataset Suite for Reinforcement Learning on Large Language Models.**
   <u>Jacob Chmura</u>*, Shahrad Mohammadzadeh*, Ivan Anokhin, Jacob-Junqi Tian, <u>**Mandana Samiei**</u>, Taz Scott-Talib, Irina Rish, Doina Precup, Reihaneh Rabbany, Nishanth Anand.
   Championing Open-Source Development in ML Workshop @ ICML, 2025. [OpenReview]

8. **Testing Causal Hypotheses through Hierarchical Reinforcement Learning.**
   Anthony GX Chen*, Dongyan Lin*, <u>**Mandana Samiei**</u>*.
   Intrinsically-Motivated and Open-Ended Learning (IMOL) Workshop @ NeurIPS, 2024. [OpenReview]

9. **Mimicking Mammalian Navigation in Watermaze using Brain-Inspired Representations**
   <u>Mandana Samiei</u>*, <u>Arna Ghosh</u>*, Blake A. Richards Biological and Artificial Reinforcement Learning
   (BARL) Workshop at NeurIPS 2020. [Poster]

10. **Torchmeta: A Meta-Learning Library for PyTorch.**
    Tristan Deleu, Tobias Würfl, **Mandana Samiei**, Joseph Paul Cohen, Yoshua Bengio.
    PyTorch Developer Conference (PTDC), 2019. [arXiv]

SELECTED INVITED TALKS AND TUTORIALS

The Role of Schemas in Reinforcement Learning	Oct. 2025
Princeton Reinforcement Learning Lab	*Remote*
– Invited research talk on schema representations in reinforcement learning.	
Large Language Models – Tutorial [GitHub]	Sept. 2025
Mediterranean Machine Learning Summer School (M2L)	*Split, Croatia*
– Delivered a tutorial on the foundations of large language models.	
Towards Efficient Generalization in Continual RL using Episodic Memory	Oct. 2021
Microsoft Research Summit 2021	*Remote*
– Invited talk on memory-augmented RL agents and their generalization efficiency.	
RL for Games – Tutorial [Notebook]	Jul. 2021
Neuromatch Academy 2021	*Remote*
– Created an interactive tutorial on reinforcement learning for games.	

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

Fonds de Recherche du Québec – Nature et Technologies (FRQNT) Doctoral Award	2022-2024
Women in AI Excellence Doctoral Scholarship, Mila	2021
UNIQUE (Unifying Neuroscience & AI) PhD Excellence Scholarship	2020
MITACS Accelerate Research Award	2019
National Merit Scholarship (top 0.2%)	2012

SELECTED TEACHING & MENTORSHIP

Tutor — Large Language Models, Mediterranean ML Summer School (M2L)	2025
Tutor — Introduction to ML, Eastern European Summer School (EEML)	2024
TA — Reinforcement Learning (COMP 579), McGill University	2022
TA — Fundamentals of Machine Learning (IFT 6390), University of Montreal	2021
TA — Intro to Robotics & Intelligent Systems (COMP 417), McGill University	2020

SERVICE & LEADERSHIP

Vice President — Women in Machine Learning (WiML)	2026-
EDI Chair and Local Chair — Conference on Lifelong Learning Agents (CoLLAs)	2025, 2024
Board Member — Women in Machine Learning (WiML)	2022–2025
Reviewer — ICLR, NeurIPS, TMLR, CoLLAs, RLC, COLM	2022–2025
Organizer — ML Reproducibility Challenge (MLRC 2023)	2023
Organizer — Mila Neuro-AI Reading Group	2020-2023

SKILLS

Programming Languages, Libraries, & APIs: Python, Jax, Java, MATLAB, Javascript/CSS/HTML, Bash,
Numpy, SciPy, Pandas, Jupyter, Git, SQL, Scikit-learn, TensorFlow, Slurm
Foundational Models, Fine-tuning and Inference: HuggingFace, vLLM, verl, Olama, OpenAI API

REFERENCES

Prof. Doina Precup – McGill University, Mila, Google DeepMind	dprecup@cs.mcgill.ca
Prof. Blake A. Richards – McGill University, Mila, Google	blake.richards@mila.quebec
Prof. Thomas Fevens – Concordia University	fevens@cs.concordia.ca
Prof. Mona Ghassemian - King's College London, Huawei	mona.ghassemian@kcl.ac.uk