Assignment 1: Introduction to Autism

In-class discussion on October 18
Individual write-up due on November 2
TAs in charge: Rachele and Christoph

Write an “introduction section”, structured like a typical introduction section of a research article, in which you introduce the central problem that is being explored in this class. Discuss the problem as a team, make sure all of you understand the problem; but write up your final version individually, in your own words. The introduction should be around 1-2 pages long, and should touch upon the following questions, which you have discussed in class:

- What is autism? Why is it so difficult to establish the genetic basis / cause of diseases like autism?
- How have new approaches in the last few decades changed the study of diseases like autism?
- What are some of the benefits and challenges of these new approaches?
- What questions does the field hope to answer? What questions do you hope to answer in this course? (this will evolve over the course of the class as you learn what is or is not possible)

Your introduction section should include the following components:

- Establish the significance of the research.
- Put it into the context of existing work.
- Identify the major open question(s) that still need to be addressed.
- Briefly summarize possible approaches to investigating these questions. You could focus on one or two that your team finds most interesting and may want to use.
- Pay attention to formal issues, e.g. make sure you include all references you used while writing your introduction!

Writing this introduction will help you build a first mental map of some of the important themes and questions in autism research. You can of course keep re-organizing this map as the course progresses. This will be quite helpful in writing the introduction section of the final write-up of your project.
**General assignment policy:** Consider the assignment in your team and flesh out possible approaches and solutions. Make sure that all members of your team are on the same page and able to discuss the issues. While collaboration is highly encouraged, you are required to submit your own individual write-up to IST_core_homework2017@ist.ac.at by the due date indicated above. Clearly, your group members’ answers will be similar to yours, but you need to formulate your write-up in your own words. There is no minimal length requirement; be concise, but give all the details you consider relevant for explaining the issues to a colleague. Inadequate assignments and assignments handed in behind schedule may have to be resubmitted, which we allow at most twice during this course.