

PSYCHOLOGY 440/540: PSYCHOLINGUISTICS, Fall 2005

Instructor: Jeff Loucks (388 Straub, 346-4075)

Email: jloucks@darkwing.uoregon.edu

Office hours: Wednesday & Friday 11:00 – 12:00

Required Reading:

- 1) Carroll, D. W. (2004). Psychology of language. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.

Overview:

Psycholinguistics (aka the psychology of language) falls at the intersection of many different fields, including linguistics, philosophy, anthropology, artificial intelligence, neuroscience, communication disorders, genetics, and of course, psychology. Our goal in this course is to use the knowledge and methods unique to each of these fields to gain a broader as well as deeper understanding of the abilities that underlie human language. A common misconception is that one learns about the specifics of particular languages in a course on psycholinguistics; for example, how Russian uses different case-endings than German. Instead, this course emphasizes commonalities that underlie human languages everywhere, and we will focus on what these commonalities tell us about the basic nature of the human language-making capacity. Along the way we will be examining questions like the following:

- Who has language, and what is so great about it?
- How different are languages really, and what might be universal about language?
- What is it like to live without language?
- To what extent is language a cultural phenomenon, and to what extent is culture a linguistic phenomenon?
- What about language is special, and what can be accounted for in terms of other things we know about the human mind and brain?
- What about language is “instinct,” and what is learned?
- Why does it seem to be more difficult to acquire a high degree of fluency in a language if you begin in adulthood rather than childhood?
- If language is lost – due to accident, illness, or other trauma – to what extent can it be regained?
- How do infants make a start at language learning, and how crucial a role do adults play in fostering infants’ language acquisition?

The overarching goal motivating the course is that you will come away with a body of knowledge about techniques for investigating language and a new appreciation for the centrality of language to human social and cognitive functioning. My hope is that you will find the material in this course to be both fascinating and challenging.

Course Requirements:

Grades for the course will be based on

- 1) In-class exams – five total, each worth 12% of your overall grade (60% in all)
- 2) Individual research review paper - 40% of the final grade

3) Extra credit - to improve your final grade by up to 4%

In-class exams will take place at the beginning of class every other Thursday, beginning the second week of classes. Each exam accounts for 12% of your final grade (60% overall). The exams will be a combination of multiple choice and short answer. The exams are designed to help motivate you to keep up with the reading and to consolidate and integrate your growing knowledge about the psychology of language. **Quizzes must be taken on the scheduled day of the quiz.** Rescheduling must be approved in advance: If you know you will absolutely not be able to attend class on a given in-class exam day (and thus miss the exam), you must talk to me ahead of time. Exceptions to this rule will only be allowed in extreme circumstances.

The individual research paper will involve selecting a topic in Psycholinguistics that interests you, and writing a 10-15 page review paper on that topic. This project will account for 40% of your overall mark. The goal of this assignment is to go beyond the material covered in this course and gain a deeper understanding of a particular aspect of Psycholinguistics. It is also aimed at refining your research and critical thinking skills, as well as provide practice for writing up an APA-style paper. I will provide an initial set of possible topics that you can consider for your paper, but do not feel limited by this list. Once you have decided on a research question and a basic course of action, you will need to check with me before you go out and do any work. What you will ultimately hand in is an independently-generated, 10-15 page APA-style write-up. My emphasis is on quality, not quantity. Since this is worth such a large proportion of your grade, you will need to approve your paper topic with me by no later than November 10th. Research papers that do not get approved by this deadline **will be docked an automatic 10%** from the paper grade (thus, 4% of your final grade). The research paper is due by 4 p.m. Wednesday of Finals Week (Dec 7th) in the main office of the Psychology Department in Straub Hall.

Extra credit to improve your overall grade by up to 4% can be earned by participating in Psychology Department research through the Psychology Department Human Subjects Pool. For each hour of participation you can earn a 1% improvement to your mark as long as you hand in a brief (1-2 page) description of the goals and methodologies of the research for each study you participated in. You can gain information about how to participate by visiting to the Human Subjects Pool website at <http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~hscoord>. If you have trouble with that route and need more information I can probably help as well. The coordinator of the Human Subjects Pool, Lisa Cromer, can also be contacted by email at hscoord@uoregon.edu, by phone at 346-4184, or by visiting her office (Room 332 Straub). The research descriptions are due by 4 p.m. Wednesday of Finals Week (Dec 7th) in the main office of the Psychology Department in Straub Hall.

Rough Timetable of Events and Accompanying Readings

<u>Approximate date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Text Readings</u>
Week 1	Language: What is it? Who has it? What's so special about it?	Chs 1 and 3
Week 2	Sound sense	Ch 4
Week 3	Meaning	Ch 5
Weeks 4-5	Structuring meaning	Chs 2 and 6 (p125-135)

Week 6	Communicating	Chs 6 (p135-151), 7, and 9
Weeks 7-8	Taking an epigenetic perspective on language	Chs 10, 11, and 12
Week 9	Language under adverse circumstances	Ch 13
Week 10	Language and thought	Ch 14

Dates of Special Significance:

Oct 6	(Thursday)	In-class exam #1
Oct 20	(Thursday)	In-class exam #2
Nov 3	(Thursday)	In-class exam #3
Nov 10	(Thursday)	Deadline for approving your paper topic
Nov 17	(Thursday)	In-class exam #4
Dec 1	(Thursday)	In-class exam #5
Dec 7	(Wednesday)	Research paper due
Dec 7	(Wednesday)	Extra credit research participation descriptions due

THREE IMPORTANT ADDITIONAL NOTES:

Academic Honesty: As a member of the university community you are expected to be honest and forthright in all your academic endeavors. To falsify the results of one's research, to present the words, ideas, data, or work of another as one's own, or to cheat on an examination corrupts the essential process by which knowledge is advanced. All work submitted in this course must be your own and produced exclusively for this course. The use of sources (ideas, quotations, paraphrases) must be properly acknowledged and documented. For the consequences of academic dishonesty, refer to the Schedule of Classes published quarterly. Violations will be taken seriously and are noted on student disciplinary records. If you are in doubt regarding any aspect of these issues as they pertain to this course, please consult with the instructor before you complete any relevant requirements of the course. (Text adopted here as recommended from the UO web site regarding academic honesty at: <http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~conduct>)

Students with Directory Restricted Access: This course includes required on-line participation that will involve use of electronic mail. If you have restricted access to your directory information and wish to have special arrangements made for this course, please notify the instructor immediately.

Students with Disabilities: If you have a documented disability and anticipate needing accommodations in this course, please make arrangements to meet with the instructor soon. It would be wise to contact Disability Services (164 Oregon Hall, 346-1155). Also please request that the Counselor for Students with Disabilities send a letter verifying your disability. [Counselor for Students with Disabilities: Molly Sirois, 346-3211, 164 Oregon Hall, 346-1073, sirois@uoregon.edu]