



PSYCHOLOGY 440/540: PSYCHOLINGUISTICS, Spring 2011

Instructor: Dr. Dare Baldwin (385 Straub, 346-4964)

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Office hours: Wednesday 2-3pm, Friday 11am-12pm

GTF: Rose Maier

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Tuesday 12-1pm, Thursday 3-4pm

Required Reading:

- 1) Akmajian, Demers, Farmer, & Harnish (2010), *Linguistics: An introduction to language and communication*, MIT Press: Cambridge, MA.

Overview:

Psycholinguistics (aka the psychology of language, and not the study of psychotic linguists, as you may have hoped) 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 such as 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.

Course Requirements:

Grades for the course will be based on 1) three in-class tests (collectively worth 30% of the overall mark), 2) a group-based research project (30% of the final grade) in which your group investigates a question of your choosing relevant to the psychology of language, and 3) an individual write-up of this research project (40%). Extra credit (to improve your final grade by up to 3%) can be gained through participation in Psychology Department research (via the Psychology Department's human subjects pool) along with a brief description of each study you participated in, or by evaluating/critiquing an empirical article investigating a topic relevant to the psychology of language.

In-class quizzes will take place on the Thursday of the third, sixth, and ninth weeks. The tests together account for 30% of your overall grade (10% each). The tests will be primarily short answer in format, but expect some variation in format over the course of the term. The quizzes 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. If you happen to miss a quiz, you will need to arrange to make it up during office hours within a week of the original quiz date.

The group-based research project will involve designing and carrying out investigation of a research question regarding everyday, naturalistic language use. This project will account for 30% of your overall mark. The goal of this assignment is to encourage you to “go below the surface” of language and think deeply about underlying factors that give rise to, or impinge on, our everyday language functioning. I will provide a set of possible topics that you can consider for your research project, but do not feel limited by this list. Once your group resolves on a research question and a basic course of action, it is a good idea to check them out with me and/or Rose Maier before you launch your data collection/analysis phase. Your group will provide a powerpoint presentation describing the goals and outcome of your research, to be posted on the blackboard website latest by Thursday, March 1.

The individual project write-up, worth 40% of your grade, will present, in your own independent fashion, the motivation for your research project, the methodology you used, what you discovered, how you interpret these findings, and what you feel their implications might be for our understanding of language functioning. Your write-up must be carried out independently. The individual write-up will be an APA-style manuscript of the research project that includes abstract, introduction, methods, results, discussion, and references sections. The research project write-up is due by 4 p.m. Monday of Finals Week (March 19) via email or in the main office of the Psychology Department in Straub Hall.

Extra credit: There are two options for extra credit. The maximum amount of extra credit you can earn is 3% toward your overall grade, and you must select one or the other option (no mixing and matching). **Option 1:** You can participate in Psychology Department research through the Psychology Department Human Subjects Pool. For each credit of participation assigned to Psych 440/540, you can earn a 1% improvement to your final grade, for up to 3%. Also necessary for gaining the extra credit is that you hand in a one-page description of the research you participated in for each of the participation credits. You can gain information by contacting the human subjects coordinator, Ida, by email at hscoord@uoregon.edu. You can also gain additional information by going to the HSP website at <http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~hscoord>. **Option 2:** You can locate an empirical article relevant to the

study of language in a major, peer-reviewed journal, summarize it, and evaluate its contribution to our understanding of the human language-making capacity. A terrific critique (target length is 3 double-spaced pages) will earn you the full 3% extra credit. It would be wise to seek approval of your article from me before beginning your evaluation/critique. To receive the extra credit you will need to hand in both a copy of the article and the evaluation/critique.

⇒ Due date for the extra credit work is Monday, March 19, by 4pm, either digitally or in hard copy at the Psychology Department main office.

Blackboard Website:

We will utilize the Blackboard website to communicate about ongoing events that arise in the course, as well as to make announcements about course-relevant information. I will post powerpoint lecture slides and other course documents, such as this syllabus. Please check it regularly – every day or two.

Rough Timetable of Events and Accompanying Readings

<u>Approximate date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Text Readings</u>
Weeks 1-2	Language: What is it? Who has it? What's so special about it?	Chs 1-2
Week 3	Sound sense	Chs 3-4
Week 4	Structure in language	Chs 5
Week 5	Making meaning	Ch 6
Weeks 6	Communicating	Chs 7 & 9
Week 7	Language, thought, mind and culture	Chs 8 & 10
Week 8	Acquiring the gift of gab	Ch 11
Weeks 9-10	Language, brain, plasticity and resilience	Chs 12

Dates of Special Significance:

Jan. 26 (Thursday)	In-class quiz #1
Feb. 16 (Thursday)	In-class quiz #2
March 1 (Thursday)	Group powerpoint presentation due
March 8 (Thursday)	In-class quiz #3
March 19 (Monday)	Individual project write-up due
March 19 (Monday)	Extra credit due

THREE IMPORTANT ADDITIONAL NOTES:

1. Guidelines for Teaching and Learning: The Psychology Department has developed guidelines for teaching and learning in Psychology. These guidelines can be accessed at the following web address: <http://psychweb.uoregon.edu/undergraduates/guidelines>

- Please read these guidelines carefully as they clarify our general expectations and goals for each other in this course.

2. 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. For more information regarding academic honesty and the student conduct code at the University of Oregon, visit the University's Office of Student Life website at: <http://studentlife.uoregon.edu/StudentConductandCommunityStandards/StudentConductCode/tabid/69/Default.aspx>

3. 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, disabsrv@uoregon.edu, <http://ds.uoregon.edu>). 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]