

PSYCHOLOGY OF LANGUAGE SYLLABUS (Summer 2012)

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The readings must be done by the date listed, and you must have posted and/or answered 3 discussion questions on the corresponding thread **by 10 a.m.** on the day listed.

The online assignments must be done and you must have posted to the corresponding thread **by 10 a.m.** on the day listed.

May 30:

Introduction

Evidence that language is an instinct

Children's acquisition & poverty of the stimulus

Pidgins/Creoles

Evidence of modularity

Language disorders

Readings: Ch. 1, 2 & post in thread

Online Assignment: Make sure you can login into the course website. Click on "thread" and then go to the "introduction thread". Inside, introduce yourself, give your major, explain your interest in the psychology of language, and tell us if there is anything else you're doing this summer. Threads will be YOUR place to have discussions, so feel free to write back to each other if someone says something of interest.

June 4:

Language & Thought

Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis

Mentalese and the Representational Theory of Mind

Bilingualism (not in Pinker)

Readings: Ch. 3 & post in thread

Online Assignment: Respond to the prompt about bilingualism

June 6:

Generative Grammar (Syntax)

Markov Model

Phrase Structure

X-bar Theory

Principles & Parameters

Readings: Ch. 4 & post in thread

Online Assignment: In the Syntax thread you will find some basic syntax problems. Work through them and answer the prompts given in the thread.

June 11:

Morphology

Regular & irregular forms

Word acquisition

The Scandal of Induction

Whole Object Bias

Basic Level

Mutual Exclusivity

Phonology

Phonology vs. phonetics

Structure of phonemes

Coarticulation

Readings: Ch. 5, 6 & post in thread

Online Assignment: There are 3 resources associated with these readings, all located in the Resources section. They are

“Infants’ Perception of Language Sounds”

“Words out of Context”

“McGurk Effect”

Do the activities described in AT LEAST 2 of them. Then respond to the prompts in the Phonology thread.

June 13:

Language Comprehension

Parsing words

Parsing sentences

Pragmatics

Reading (not in Pinker)

Q&A for Midterm (I will answer any specific questions you bring)

Readings: Ch. 7 & post in thread

Online Assignment: Read the short interview on Watson & watch one or two of the videos on disorders. Answer the prompts in the thread.

June 18:

MIDTERM (Ch. 1-7 and corresponding lectures, including bilingualism & reading)

.... 10 minute break

Lexical semantics

Classical theory

Prototype theory

Connectionism

Online Assignment: Prototype Activity (see assignment for details)

June 20:

Language Development

Acquisition (biological & environmental factors)

The critical period

Language Universals

Hockett’s Design Features

Chomsky's universals
How languages change

Readings: Ch. 8, 9 & 10 & post in thread

Online Assignment: Do the activity described in "Hockett's Design Features" and answer the prompts given in the Hockett's Design Features thread. Also, I highly suggest you do all of the "lexical semantics" classwork-like questions and post about as many of them as you like, especially the ones you're not 100% sure about.

June 25:

Neurolinguistics

Brain-imaging

Types of aphasia

Neuroanatomy

Genetics of language

Readings: Ch. 10 & post in thread

Online Assignment: Read Ch. 1 of David Marr's Vision & write a response in the thread.

June 27:

Animal communication

Language evolution

Prescriptive vs. descriptive grammar

Determinism vs. relativism

Q & A for final (I will answer any specific questions you bring)

Readings: Ch. 11, 12, 13 & post in thread

Online Assignment: Watch the "How Smart Are Animals" video linked in this unit and respond to the prompts given in the Animals thread.

July 2:

FINAL (Ch 8-13 & Corresponding lectures, and Lexical Semantics)

Guidelines for Success

Grades:

1/3 Midterm (June 18)

1/3 Final (July 2)

1/3 Classwork & Online Participation (See below)

Note: Both exams will be completely short-answer. Everything on the exams will come from the lectures and the readings. No surprises!

Make sure to bring your book to every class!

A hybrid class provides the best of both worlds! We'll come together twice a week for lecture and discussion, and in between you'll have a chance to do some activities on your own and have online discussions on the message board. I've laid out all of your responsibilities very carefully in the syllabus, so you will always know exactly what you need to do before each class.

A third of your grade comes from classwork and online participation. Everyone should receive full credit for this third, provided you follow some simple guidelines.

There are three components to this third, and you must complete **every part for every one** of the 10 non-exam classes. (You do NOT have these requirements for the dates of the midterm and the final.)

1. **Classwork:** During each class, I will give you questions that relate to the readings and the lectures. You will work in groups of 3-4 to answer these questions, although each person must write down answers on his/her own sheet of paper, and then we will come back together as a group to go over the answers and I hope, have meaningful discussions about them. At the end of each class, I will collect your answers and award you either a Pass (100%) if you reasonably attempted all questions or Fail (0%) if you did not answer all questions or did not hand in any answers. I will hand back your answers at the start of the following class, so you can use them to review.
2. **Reading threads:** For each class, I will post a thread with the title and date of that day's class, as per the syllabus. By 10 a.m. BEFORE the start of the class, you must come up with three discussion questions. Alternatively, you may answer other class members' discussion questions. (Or you may do some combination of the two, as long as you make three points in all.) Please refer to the Reading Threads guidelines (below) to make sure you get full credit and, more importantly, that these threads are productive and interesting for all.
3. **Online Assignment threads:** For the online half of the class, you will do an activity (either watching a film or completing an online experiment) corresponding to each class' theme. You will NOT be graded on how you do on the experiments themselves. In fact, I won't even see your results! Rather, you will receive credit for posting meaningfully to the thread corresponding to each online activity, as per the syllabus. Please refer to the Online Assignment Threads guidelines (below).

Please be aware of the **Rutgers Academic Integrity Policy:**

<http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/integrity.shtml>

In Summary:

1. No cheating. (If you do the readings and come to class, you will have no problem doing very well, so there is no need to cheat.)
2. No posting any of my notes, questions, or exams online. (This is illegal and counts as cheating!)

Absence Policy:

Please let me know as soon as possible if you will not be able to attend a class or will not be able to complete an online component by the deadline. Excused absences include religious observances, serious illness (confirmed by a doctor's note), or a serious family emergency (excused by the Dean of your college). Classwork, online participation, and exams can only be made up for these reasons, and only if reasonable notice is given.

Extra Help:

I do not have specific office hours, but I am always more than happy to meet with you outside of class. We can meet in my office Psych115 or my lab Psych114, on Busch Campus. Alternatively, we can meet right after class on College Ave. Please email me if you have any questions or would like to set up a time to meet.

I will check the online threads once a day. If you have questions that are not time-sensitive and that you think might interest others, feel free to post in those threads. However, **if you have a question that requires an immediate response (or a personal question), please email me.** I check my email about every 5 seconds, so that's your best bet.

Extra Credit:

You can participate in select experiments for 1 extra credit point added to your final grade per experiment, up to 5 for the semester. I will let you know as these arise, and you will need to let me know if you have participated.

Last year students raised interesting points/questions on ecollege that I didn't have time to address in class. When this happened, I posted optional readings (generally classic, seminal works) that addressed these posts. If I do this, you're free to post a thoughtful 1-2 page response to these readings for extra credit. Brownie points if you can find problems with these works!

I will also offer some extra credit questions on the exams.

Reading Threads Guidelines

There are 2 reasons I have chosen *The Language Instinct* as the main text for this course. The first is that it provides a good foundation for understanding the psychology of language. In other words, there are facts I hope you will learn. The second reason is far more important. Steven Pinker does a phenomenal job of supporting his central hypothesis—that we are born with a language instinct—with clear arguments. In reading his book, and throughout the class in general, I'd like you to learn to think like a psycholinguist.

More specifically:

- Your goal in the threaded discussion is NOT simply to summarize what you have read. Instead:
- Criticize:
 - Do you see any flaws in Pinker's arguments? (or in the supplementary texts we'll look the last week)
 - Are there any inconsistencies between what he says in one part of the book and what he says later on?
 - Sometimes Pinker will give EVIDENCE in favor of a THEORY. Can you think of any alternative explanations for that evidence?
- Make connections:
 - Think about what you've read for previous classes, the online assignments, material we've covered in class, previous discussions, other things you may know.
 - Can you draw any interesting conclusions? Can you make connections in new ways?
- Raise questions:
 - Was anything unclear in the reading? I can guarantee you weren't the only one who had trouble! Feel free to ask questions about things that you struggled to understand

- Did the reading make you wonder about something else, even if it is slightly off topic? Feel free to raise interesting questions. If we start going on TOO much of a tangent, I'll reign everyone back in.
- Collaborate:
 - The best research and the best learning happens when great minds come together. If someone else has asked a question and you have an answer (or a follow-up question) please answer it!

Please write THREE questions or comments for each reading (although you're free to write more if you get inspired). They don't have to be long, but rather, they should be thoughtful.

Give it a try for the first week, and I'll give you feedback if you're falling short of full-credit posts.

Online Assignment Threads Guidelines

The guidelines for writing about your online assignments are not very different from the guidelines for responding to readings. You should read those first because they go into more detail.

Once again, you do NOT simply want to summarize what you saw or what you did.

Rather, think about how the film you watched or the activity you did fits in with the reading for that week and general themes of the class. Are there any conflicts between things you've discovered in the activity and other things you've learned in the class? Can you draw parallels between something in the activity and the readings or previous activities? Can you respond to anyone else's posts in the threaded discussion?

For some of the online assignments, you may see specific questions. If so, you may choose to answer these or come up with your own responses to the activities, or both.

I hesitate to tell you how much you should write, but as a guideline, you should be able to write at least a paragraph. Once again, I know these discussion boards may be new for some of you, so give it your best shot, and I will give you feedback after the first week.