

PSYCHOLOGY OF LANGUAGE SYLLABUS (Summer 2014)

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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 1 pm.** on the day BEFORE class.

The online assignments must be done and you must have posted to all of the corresponding threads **by 1 pm** on the day BEFORE class

JUNE 2

Introduction

Evidence that language is an instinct

Children's acquisition & poverty of the stimulus

Pidgins/Creoles

Evidence of modularity

Language disorders

Language & Thought

Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis

Mentalese and the Representational Theory of Mind

Generative Grammar (Syntax)

Markov Model

Phrase Structure

Principles & Parameters

Readings: Ch. 1 - 4

Online Assignments:

1. 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.
2. In the Syntax thread you will find some basic syntax problems. Work through them and answer the prompts given in the thread.

JUNE 9

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

Language Comprehension

- Parsing words
- Parsing sentences
- Pragmatics

Readings: Ch. 5 – 7, optional reading on Optimality Theory

Online Assignment:

1. Watch the 2 videos on phonology and respond to the prompts.
3. Read the 2 articles on pragmatics and language disorders and respond to the prompts.
2. Read the short interview on Watson and answer the prompt.

JUNE 16

MIDTERM Ch. 1-7 and corresponding lectures

No Reading Assignment (optional reading assignment on lexical semantics)

Lexical semantics

- Classical theory
- Prototype theory
- Exemplar theory
- Connectionism (neural networks)

Online Assignment: Prototype Activity (see assignment for details)

JUNE 23

Language Development

- Acquisition (biological & environmental factors)
- The critical period

Language Universals

- Hockett's Design Features
- Chomsky's universals
- How languages change

Neurolinguistics

- Brain-imaging
- Types of aphasia
- Neuroanatomy
- Genetics of language

Levels of representation (Marr)

Readings: Ch. 8 – 10 of Pinker, Ch. 1 of David Marr's Vision & write a response in the thread.

Online Assignments:

1. Do the activity described in “Hockett’s Design Features” and answer the prompts given in the Hockett’s Design Features thread.
2. Write a response to Marr’s chapter

JUNE 30

Animal communication

Language evolution

Prescriptive vs. descriptive grammar

Determinism vs. relativism

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

FINAL (Chapters 8 – 13, Lexical Semantics, Marr’s Chapter, Corresponding lectures)

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

Guidelines for Success

Grades:

Midterm	30 points
Final	30 points
Classwork & Online Participation	30 points
Oral Presentation	10 points

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.

30% 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 9 non-exam classes. (You do NOT have these requirements for the dates of the midterm and the final.) If you are missing ANY of the 3 parts, you will not get ANY of the 6 points for that class.

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 dean's letter), 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 psych121b 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.

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?
 - 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.

ORAL PRESENTATION GUIDE

Your oral presentation will have 2 components:

- 5 minute (MAXIMUM) presentation on your assigned day. (You might want to time yourself, because I am going to cut you off after 5 minutes.)
- An outline of your presentation (MAXIMUM 1 page single spaced), emailed to me BEFORE the start of class, so I can post it on Sakai for everyone to follow along with.

Keeping to the maximum time and page length will help you stick to the important points.

Parts of the outline:

- Introduction: What question are the authors trying to answer?
- Methods: How do they address this question?
- Results: What are the findings?
- Discussion: What do the findings say about the question they were asking? Other things you might want to include in the discussion section: In what ways are these findings compatible/not compatible with other things we've talked about in class or you've read about? Are there other possible interpretations of the findings? Can you think of an interesting follow up experiment?

Depending on the length and complexity of the paper you chose, you may not be able to address every question/experiment in the paper. It's okay, for example, to report on only one experiment in a paper or just one/some sections of a longer/more complicated paper. If you're not sure whether to discuss your whole paper or which section(s) to focus on, we can look at this together (as ahead of time as possible).

