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Office: Psychology 115
Office hours: Tuesday and Thursday 1:00pm – 2:00pm and by arrangement

Syllabus

Disclaimer: This syllabus can be changed at any time! Changes will be announced via email.

Course Objectives: This course will introduce you to major topics of study in psycholinguistics (the psychology of language). You will also learn the importance of the study of language in advancing cognitive science. By the end of this course you should have a basic understanding about the way people acquire, understand, and use language.

Requirements: This is a hybrid course, which means some of the course will happen in the classroom and the rest of it will happen online. Because of this, you must have internet access to complete this course! The online portion of the course will include streaming video content, reading .pdf documents, and participating in online discussions. If your home internet connection is too slow to handle the online portion of the course, then make sure to use the computer labs on campus for this purpose. Missing course material for technical reasons will not be excused except in extreme circumstances. Additionally, you need to check your email regularly for announcements about the course and emails from me. Make sure your email address is up to date and check your email frequently!

Text: The textbook for the course is as follows and should be available at the bookstore.

Title: The Language Instinct
Author: Steven Pinker
Publisher: Harper Perennial Modern Classics
ISBN #: 978-0-06-133646-1

Additional readings will be posted online. These will include articles from science magazines (National Geographic, Discover, Scientific American), blogs, podcasts, and journal articles.

Note: Some lecture content will also be based on another textbook, which you are **not** required to buy! In the interest of full disclosure, that textbook is *Language in Mind: An Introduction to Psycholinguistics*, First Edition, by Julie Sedivy; ISBN: 978-0-87893-598-7. You will not need this book for the course.

Attendance: As a hybrid course, this class has only 11 meetings in the classroom. Because of this, it is crucial that you attend class. I will upload slides from my lectures for you to refer to later, but the content of those slides will be limited. In order to really understand the material, you will need to attend class and take notes. I will not be taking attendance and penalizing you for missing class; however, you should expect your grade to suffer if you miss crucial lecture material. In the event that you do miss class, it is your responsibility to review the lecture slides online and ask me any questions you might have about the material. If you have a legitimate reason for missing class (illness, religious observance, family emergency, etc.) notify me as soon as you are able. Advanced notice should be given whenever possible.

Exams: Exams will be given in class only. There will be two exams: one midterm and one final exam. The exams will be based on lecture content, assigned readings, and assigned media. Anything we cover in class or in required media will be fair game. The exams will consist of matching, fill-in-the-blank, short answer, and short essay questions. Each exam will be non-

cumulative: the midterm will test all content we reach before it, and the final exam will test all content between the midterm and the final.

Assignments: There will be six available short assignments (1-2 pages in length) given throughout the semester, starting in the second week of class. You will have to complete five of the six, each of which is worth 2% of your grade (10% total).

Participation: You are required to participate in online discussions based on the assigned online content and chapters from the text. Each week there will be readings and/or other media (video, audio) assigned to you based on the current class topic. You are expected to contribute something meaningful to the discussion on each, either by creating a discussion thread or continuing an ongoing discussion. You are welcome to criticize the assigned media and argue against what is being claimed, so long as the discussion stays civil and your arguments are sound. Discussion posts must be submitted by 8:00 pm EST before the next class, so that I can tweak the lecture based on your comments if needed.

You are also encouraged to participate in class discussions and raise questions you may have about the course material.

Grading: The exams will make up 30% of your grade each (60% of your grade together)
 Participation will make up 30% of your grade
 Short online assignments will make up 10% of your grades

Schedule: The schedule of topics and accompanying Pinker chapters is as follows. Additional readings and resources will likely be added, which I will announce via email and on the course site.

| Date | Topics | Readings and Media |
|-----------------------|---|---|
| July 7 th | Language origins and universals | Pinker Ch. 2 Noam Chomsky: The Radical Linguist FOXP2: A Gene That May Explain How Our Ancestors Acquired Language Mark Pagel: How Language Transformed Humanity (TED talk) |
| July 9 th | Communication vs. language, animal communication, nonverbal communication | World Without Words Silent Warrior The Scent of Your Thoughts Speaking Bonobo Susan Savage-Rumbaugh: On Apes That Write (TED talk + youtube videos) Neil deGrasse Tyson: How Smart Are Dogs? |
| July 14 th | Word meaning and the lexicon | Pinker Ch. 5 The Brian Lehrer Show: An Antidote to What the Spin Doctors Ordered (podcast) Radiolab: Words (podcast) |
| July 16 th | Language and thought | Pinker Ch. 3 How Language Shapes Thought Keith Chen: Could Your Language Affect Your Ability to Save Money? (TED talk) Mark Forsyth: What's a Snollygoster? A Short Lesson in Political Speak (TED talk) |

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| July 21 st | Language acquisition, bilingualism, L2 learning | Pinker Ch. 9 Speech Perception and Language Acquisition in the First Year of Life Patricia Kuhl: The Linguistic Genius of Babies (TED talk) Deb Roy: The Birth of a Word (TED talk) |
| July 23 rd | Midterm exam The critical period, speech perception | Solving the Cocktail Party Problem Talk to the Machine A Confederacy of Senses Secret of the Wild Child (documentary) Ann Senghas on Nicaraguan Sign Language (CARTA talk) |
| July 28 th | Syntax and sentence processing | Pinker Ch. 7 |
| July 30 th | Language production, phonology | Pinker Ch. 6 Megan Washington: The Thing Is, I Stutter (TEDx talk) |
| August 4 th | Neurolinguistics, language disorders | Pinker Ch. 10 Broca's aphasia, Wernicke's aphasia, and transient aphasia (youtube videos) Transcranial magnetic stimulation demonstration (youtube video) |
| August 6 th | Prescriptive vs. descriptive grammar, sociolinguistics | Pinker Ch. 12 John McWhorter: Txtng is killing language, JK! (TED talk) Erin McKean: Go Ahead, Make Up New Words! (TED talk) Anne Curzan: What Makes A Word Real? (TED talk) |
| August 11 th | Final exam | |

Academic Integrity: Cheating of any kind is prohibited (see the [Academic Integrity at Rutgers](#) policy for more information on this). All written work that you submit, including exams, short assignments, and online participation, must be your own. Do not copy your work from other sources or other students! If you are unclear on what constitutes cheating or plagiarism and you are concerned that you might be unintentionally plagiarizing, send me an email and we can talk about it. It is fine to discuss the topic of your assignments with your classmates, so long as all work you turn in is your own.

Classroom Conduct: As a hybrid course, our class time will be at a premium. It is important that you come to class on time! Coming to class late is distracting for everyone else in the class, and you could miss important lecture content. In the event that you are late and miss part of the lecture, it is your responsibility to read the lecture slides on what you missed and ask questions if needed. Do not use your cell phones during class! Please keep them off or on silent during the lecture. Cell phone use is also distracting to the rest of the class, and is disrespectful.