

PSYC 442 – PSYCHOLOGY OF LANGUAGE (Spring, 2015)

WHEN & WHERE: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 9:30–10:45 am (BPS 1236)
INSTRUCTOR: Dr. L. Robert Slevc (slevc@umd.edu)
OFFICE HOURS: Mondays 1:00-2:00 (BPS 3109) or by appointment
TEACHING ASST: Lisa Kaufman (lisaikaufman@gmail.com)
OFFICE HOURS: Tuesdays 2:00 – 4:00 (Footnotes Cafe in McKeldin Library)

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

One of the most complex aspects of human cognition is our ability to produce and comprehend language. This may seem effortless, but consider the last time you tried to communicate with a machine or learn a new language, and you can get a sense of how amazing a feat language processing really is. This course provides an introduction to theory and empirical research on fundamental questions in psycholinguistics, such as: How do we acquire language? Can non-human animals use language? How do we translate vibrations in the air into meaning? How do we translate ideas into a series of words? What does it mean to know a word? How can we know multiple languages? Is language processing modular or interactive? How is language represented in the brain? What goes wrong in language disorders? How is language related to thought?

Learning Outcomes: After taking this course you should understand current theories and debates that motivate psycholinguistic research, understand which research methods are appropriate to address different questions in the field, learn to critically evaluate empirical journal articles, and improve your ability to discuss and communicate this knowledge through class participation and written assignments.

REQUIRED READINGS:

Harley, Trevor A. (2010). *Talking the Talk: Language, Psychology and Science*. New York: Psychology Press.

In addition, we will read several chapters and articles that will be posted on the course website.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING:

- **Course Participation (5%):** This is a relatively small class, so you are expected to attend class having done the assigned readings, to ask questions, and to contribute to discussions.
- **Quizzes (5%):** Short in-class quizzes, each worth 1% of your final grade, will be given at various times through the course (noted on the schedule, below). These are intended to help you learn, to evaluate your progress, and to give you some experience with how we write exam questions. There will be no make-up opportunities for missed quizzes, however you may drop your lowest quiz score.
- **Written Assignments (30%):** You will be required to write 3 short (2-4 page) papers in response to assignments given throughout the term. Each of these papers will be worth 10% of your final grade. Although discussion in class and with classmates is encouraged, these papers must be your *own work* – see the Psychology Department’s policy statement on academic integrity (attached) for more details. Specific details for each assignment will be provided at least one week before it is due.
- **Exams (60%):** There will be three exams covering material from lectures and assigned readings: two midterms and a final exam, each worth 20% of your final grade. Exams will contain a mix of multiple choice and short answer questions. Midterm exams will not be cumulative per se, but the second midterm will require some knowledge of material covered in the previous section of the course. The final exam will be cumulative, but with a focus on new material covered since the second midterm. Make-up exams will only be offered in the event of an excused, documented absence (see below).

• **Extra credit:** You may earn up to three percentage points of extra credit (thus giving you up to a 3% increase in your final grade) by participating as a subject in psychology experiments. If you choose to participate in experiments, I encourage you to do so early in the term. You can sign up for experiments online at: <http://umpsychology.sona-systems.com/>.

You may earn one additional percentage point of extra credit by completing an evaluation for this course at www.courseevalum.umd.edu, which will become available near the end of the term. Take a screenshot (or print) the “Evaluations Dashboard” showing that you submitted an evaluation, and submit it on ELMS before the final exam. Be sure that this page does *not* include your responses, but *does* include your name.

POLICIES (see also <http://ter.ps/psycsyllabi> for the department’s standard course policies)

• **Academic Integrity:** In this course, as in all of your courses at Maryland, you are responsible for upholding the code of academic integrity. Any student found in violation of this code will be referred to the Student Honor Counsel. Violations include cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, and plagiarism. For more information, please see <http://shc.umd.edu/> and the attached supplement from the Psychology Department on ethics and plagiarism.

• **Attendance:** I expect you to take responsibility for your own learning. I hope you will attend class, but I understand that an occasional absence may be unavoidable. In these situations, I encourage you to befriend a classmate who can brief you on what you missed. In accordance with university policy, make-up exams will only be offered in the event of an excused, documented absence. More specifically, I will *not* give a make-up exam unless:

- a) You missed the exam due to illness, in which case you must provide written documentation from the Health Center or an outside health care provider. This documentation must verify dates of treatment and indicate the time frame that you were unable to meet academic responsibilities.
- b) Your absence was due to religious observance. If you must miss an exam because of a religious holiday, please inform me in writing by **Friday, February 6th** (the schedule adjustment deadline) and we will make alternate arrangements.

• **General Politeness:** Please be in class on time and be courteous with use of electronic devices such as mobile phones and laptops. I have no problem with snacks and beverages so long as you avoid food that is especially pungent or has loud crinkly wrappers.

• **Grading:** Your grade will be determined by your performance on the course requirements listed above. I am happy to discuss your grades with you, however any formal grade disputes must be submitted in writing within 1 week of receiving the grade. Letter grades will correspond to the weighted sum of the grades for each requirements (i.e., $.05 \times \text{participation} + .30 \times \text{papers} + .65 \times \text{exams}$) as follows:

Letter grade breakdown (lower cutoff scores)											
A+	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-
97.0%	93.0%	90.0%	87.0%	83.0%	80.0%	77.0%	73.0%	70.0%	67.0%	63.0%	60.0%

Late assignments will be penalized by one grade step per day late (e.g., an A- quality assignment turned in within 24 hours after the due date would receive a B+).

• **Special needs & disabilities:** Students who require accommodations for a disability must be registered with the Disability Support Service (DSS). DSS documentation must be current for this semester and presented by the schedule adjustment deadline. More information on University policies can be found at <http://www.counseling.umd.edu/DSS/>

PSYC 442 – COURSE SCHEDULE & READING LIST (Spring, 2015)
(subject to change – see the website – <http://elms.umd.edu> – for updates)

Week	Day	Date	Topic	Reading
1	Tuesday	1/27/15	Introduction	Harley, pp. 1-17
	Thursday	1/29/15	What is language?	Yule (1996), pp. 40-60
2	Tuesday	2/3/15	How do we study language?	Harley, pp. 17-29
	Thursday	2/5/15	Animal communication	Harley, pp. 31-48
3	Tuesday	2/10/15	Animal communication *quiz 1*	Herman et al. (1993)
	Thursday	2/12/15	Development	Harley, pp. 49-87
4	Tuesday	2/17/15	Development *hw 1 due*	
	Thursday	2/19/15	Thought	Harley, pp. 89-115
5	Tuesday	2/24/15	Thought *quiz 2*	Frank et al. (2008); Pullum (1989)
	Thursday	2/26/15	Catch up & review	
6	Tuesday	3/3/15	Midterm exam 1	
	Thursday	3/5/15	Meaning	Harley, pp. 117-143
7	Tuesday	3/10/15	Meaning	
	Thursday	3/12/15	Speech perception *quiz 3*	Harley, pp. 145-154
Spring break				
8	Tuesday	3/24/15	Speech perception *hw 2 due*	Nygaard et al. (2009)
	Thursday	3/26/15	SLA / bilingualism	Bialystok (2009)
9	Tuesday	3/31/15	Reading	Harley, pp. 154-185
	Thursday	4/2/15	Reading *quiz 4*	Schotter et al. (2014)
10	Tuesday	4/7/15	Catch up & review	
	Thursday	4/9/15	Midterm exam 2	
11	Tuesday	4/14/15	Understanding	Harley, pp. 187-207
	Thursday	4/16/15	Understanding	Harley, pp. 207-220
12	Tuesday	4/21/15	Understanding *quiz 5*	Glucksburg (2003)
	Thursday	4/23/15	Speaking	Harley, pp. 221-247
13	Tuesday	4/28/15	Speaking *quiz 6*	Keysar & Henley (2002)
	Thursday	4/30/15	Dialogue	Garrod & Pickering (2004)
14	Tuesday	5/5/15	Brain *hw 3 due*	Harley, pp. 248-253
	Thursday	5/7/15	Brain	Dronkers & Baldo (2009)
15	Tuesday	5/12/15	Catch up & review	
	Friday	5/15/15	Final Exam (8:00-10:00 am)	

ADDITIONAL READINGS

(electronic copies of these readings will be posted under the “files” section of the course website)

- Bialystok, E. (2009). Bilingualism: The good, the bad, and the indifferent. *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition*, 12, 3-11.
- Dronkers, N. F. & Baldo, J. (2009). Language: Aphasia. In Larry Squire (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Neuroscience*, Vol. 5 (pp. 343-348). Oxford, UK: Academic Press.
- Frank, M. C., Everett, D. L., Fedorenko, E., & Gibson, E. (2008). Number as cognitive technology: Evidence from Pirahã language and cognition. *Cognition*, 108, 819-824.
- Garrod, S. & Pickering, M. J. (2004). Why is conversation so easy? *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 8, 8-11.
- Glucksburg, S. (2003). The psycholinguistics of metaphor. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 7, 92-96.
- Herman, L. M., Kuczaj, S. A., & Holder, M. D. (1993). Responses to anomalous gestural sequences by a language-trained Dolphin: Evidence for processing of semantic relations and syntactic information. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 122(2), 184-194.
- Keysar, B. & Henly, A. S. (2002). Speakers' overestimation of their effectiveness. *Psychological Science*, 13(3), 207-212.
- Nygaard, L. C., Cook, A. E., & Namy, L. L. (2009). Sound to meaning correspondences facilitate word learning. *Cognition*, 112, 181-186.
- Pullum, G. K. (1991). *The Great Eskimo Vocabulary Hoax and other Irreverent Essays on the Study of Language*. University of Chicago Press. (Ch. 19).
- Schotter, E. R., Tran, R., & Rayner, K. (2014). Don't believe what you read (only once): Comprehension is supported by regressions during reading. *Psychological Science*, 25(6), 1218-1226.
- Yule, G. (1996). *The Study of Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (Chs. 5-6)

Note that this list may be incomplete – please check the course website for updates.

Copyright: The materials for this course, including lectures and exams, are protected by federal copyright law. You are permitted to take notes and use materials during the course period as is relevant to the course. You are not permitted to record, reproduce, or distribute any course materials for commercial purposes either during or after the course period. Selling or distributing copies of my course materials, possessing commercial copies of my notes, or assisting another person or entity in selling or distributing those materials may be considered in violation of the University Code of Student Conduct, part 9(k).