

LING 449E: Biology of Language

Fall 2015

Instructor: Chris Heffner (heffner@umd.edu)

Days: Tu/Th, 2:00pm-3:15pm

Location: MMH 1304

Office Hours: By appointment (3416F MMH)

Website: elms.umd.edu

Required Textbooks: none

Course Description

What defines human language? Are other animals capable of using language in the same ways that humans can? These questions and more will be discussed here, bringing together insights from linguistics, psychology, neuroscience, and animal behavior. This class will be a discussion-heavy course. You will be expected to present several papers throughout the semester to your classmates, from both the animal and human literatures. It will also be very hands-on: you will have several opportunities to build and execute experiments yourself during the class, culminating in a final project that you will be expected to write up and present to your classmates.

Prerequisites

This is an advanced interdisciplinary seminar; although I do not expect anyone to have an extensive background in all of the topics that we address, I do expect you to have substantive background in at least some of the topics under discussion. For LING majors, I expect you to have taken Phonology 1 (LING 321) and Syntax 1 (LING 311). For other majors, I expect similarly advanced coursework: for example, HESP 300, or PSYC 301.

Course Goals

By the end of this class, you should be able to:

- Evaluate the human and animal behavior literatures critically
- Gain skills related to the production of written research material (e.g., lab reports)
- Confidently present scientific studies to peer audiences
- Formulate a theoretical argument related to critical issues in language science
- Generate novel experimental ideas and carry them out in a lab setting

Grading and Assignments

Grading for the class will be based on eight criteria. All assignments, reflections, etc. will be turned in via ELMS, unless I hear otherwise from you before the due date of the assignment.

Assignment	Proportion	Description
Paper Reflections	5%	Brief (<1 paragraph) written discussion points about the assigned papers.
In-Class Discussion	10%	Daily contributions to and engagement with discussion.
In-Class Presentations	15%	Joint presentations of papers (5 per pair) and leading of discussions.
Lab Reports/ Position Papers (Worst paper dropped)	20%	Reproductions of previous experiments and papers arguing in favor of particular positions related to controversial issues.
FINAL PROJECT		
Project Topic	5%	Tell me what your final project will be about.
Project Proposal	10%	A brief (1-2 page) proposal related to your research project.
Final Paper	30%	A longer (~10 page) paper about your proposed experiment, and its implications for the broader questions we discuss in the class.
Final Presentation	5%	A 10 minute presentation of your experiment and results to the rest of the class.

Late lab reports, position papers, project topics, and project proposals will be accepted by the next available class day with a 50% penalty. Late paper reflections indicate to me that you have not done the required reading for a class, and will not be accepted. As the final paper is due on the final exam day, late final papers will not be accepted. If you believe you have a university-sanctioned exception to any of these late assignment policies, please let me know as soon as possible.

Course Schedule

Month	Date	Day	Topic	Animal Paper	People Paper	Assignments
September	17	Th	Syntax	Corballis (2007) Stephen/John	Opitz & Friederici (2003) Caleb/Neomi	
	22	Tu		Lab 1: Perruchet & Rey (2005)		
	24	Th	Emotions + Prosody	Vettin & Todt (2005) Stephen/Bradford	Grandjean et al. (2005) John/Caleb	
	29	Tu		Seyfarth et al. (1980) Chris	Arnal et al. (2015) Neomi/Jacqui	
October	1	Th	Emotions + Prosody	Owren et al. (2010) John/Caleb	Oller et al. (2013) Sanna/Rebecca	Lab 1 Writeup
	6	Tu		Lab 2: Grandjean et al. (2005)		
	8	Th	Phonology	Yip (2006) Stephen/Sanna	Johnson & Babel (2010) Caleb/Bradford	
	13	Tu		Samuels (2015) John/Jacqui	Skoruppa et al. (2012) Neomi/Rebecca	
	15	Th		Engesser et al. (2015) Stephen/Sanna	Ettlinger et al. (2014) Chris	
	20	Tu	Lab 3: Johnson & Babel (2010)		Lab 2 Writeup	
	22	Th	Categorical Perception	Kuhl & Miller (1978) Stephen/Neomi	Burns & Ward (1978) Jacqui/Bradford	
	27	Tu		Weary (1989) Chris	Sharma & Dorman (1999) Caleb/Sanna	
	29	Th		Lotto et al. (1997) Jacqui/Bradford	Ingram & Park (1998) John/Rebecca	
November	3	Tu	Lab 4: Burns & Ward (1978)		Lab 3 Writeup; Final Paper Topic	
	5	Th	Mirror Neurons + Theory of Mind	Gallese & Goldman (1998) Caleb/Rebecca	Galantucci et al. (2006) Neomi/Sanna	
	10	Tu		Gallese (2008) Chris	D'Ausilio et al. (2009) Stephen/Jacqui	
	12	Th		Call & Tomasello (2008) Neomi/Rebecca	Hickok (2009) John/Bradford	
	17	Tu	Final Project Programming/ Data Collection (No Chris on 11/19)			Lab 4 Writeup
	19	Th				Final Project Due
	24	Tu				
December	1	Tu				
	3	Th				
	8	Tu	Final Presentations			
	10	Th				
	17	Th				

Expectations

Expectations for You

As a student, I expect you to participate fully in the class. You should contribute to course discussions, do your assignments in a timely fashion (see below), and participate during lab days. You should read all assigned papers before the class in which they're going to be discussed, at least enough to discuss the papers effectively in class. Although there is no explicit mandatory attendance policy, missing class without being previously excused may lead you to lose participation points in the course. If you do need to miss class (due to medical reasons, travel, or religious holidays), please try to give me at least 24 hours' notice. Also, let me know if you need accommodations for a disability that will affect your functioning in this class, and I'm happy to accommodate.

Technology

You are expected to bring a copy of papers being discussed in class every day. Whether these are paper or electronic is up to your discretion. Our classroom will come equipped with a great deal of technology, so anticipate that most of your needs will be met by what we have in the room. However, if you choose to bring your own laptop in order to read the papers, please do not use it for other purposes (email, Facebook, etc.); doing so means that you may lose your privileges to bring such technology into your classroom, and there is plenty of cognitive psychology research suggesting that such distractions will impair your learning. Please also avoid using cell phones or other handheld electronic devices during class, as this will harm the quality of our discussion. If you wish to use a personal recording device to record discussion, please speak to me first.

Academic Dishonesty

Cheating on academic work will not be tolerated in any form, and will be subject to strong penalties in this class and the university system. If you cheat on an exam or on an assignment, you risk failing the class. Collaboration is encouraged on certain assignments, and in group presentations; however, all assignments turned in must be your own work.

Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, misrepresenting someone else's work as your own, falsifying any information in a citation or academic exercise, using unauthorized materials in any academic exercise, or helping (or attempting to help) another to commit an act of academic dishonesty.

The University of Maryland, College Park has a nationally recognized Code of Academic Integrity, administered by the Student Honor Council. This Code sets standards for academic integrity at Maryland for all undergraduate and graduate students. As a student you are responsible for upholding these standards for this course. It is very important for you to be aware of the consequences of cheating, fabrication, facilitation, and plagiarism. For more information on the Code of Academic Integrity or the Student Honor Council, please visit <http://www.shc.umd.edu>.

For more information on writing and how to avoid plagiarism, please see <http://www.bsos.umd.edu/hesp/degreePrograms/current/reswriting.htm>

What You Can Expect From Me

As an instructor, meanwhile, you should expect me to aid you in your learning, return assignments to you in a timely fashion, and use clear and consistent grading criteria during the course of the class. I

want you to succeed! So please let me know if there's something I can do to improve your class experience.

Copyright

My lectures and course materials, including power point presentations, tests, outlines, and similar materials, are protected by copyright. I am the exclusive owner of copyright in those materials I create. You may take notes and make copies of course materials for your own use. You may not and may not allow others to reproduce or distribute lecture notes and course materials publicly whether or not a fee is charged without my express written consent. Similarly, you own copyright in your original papers and exam essays. If I am interested in posting your answers or papers on the course web site, I will ask for your written permission.

Persons who publicly distribute or display or help others publicly distribute or display copies or modified copies of an instructor's Course Materials may be considered in violation of the University Code of Student Conduct, Part 9(k).

Course Evaluation

Your feedback about this course is very important to me. As this is a new class, I anticipate I may give you ways to give feedback during the course itself. One important campus-wide evaluation is the online evaluation at the end of the semester. CourseEvalUM will be open to students to complete their evaluation for Fall 2015 courses at www.courseevalum.umd.edu).