



**ENG 562: Psycholinguistics**  
**Spring 2014, M 7:20–10p, BA 338/MPLX120**

**Instructor:** Christian F. Hempelmann, Ph.D.

**Office:** Hall of Languages 226

**Office Hours:**

*online* workdays 10am–10pm

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**COURSE INFORMATION**

**Materials – Textbooks, Readings, Supplementary Readings:**

*Required textbooks:*

- Aitchison, Jean. 2011. *The Articulate Mammal: An Introduction to Psycholinguistics*. New York: Routledge.
- Pinker, Steven. 1994. *The Language Instinct*. HarperCollins.
- Sampson, Geoffrey. 2005. *The 'Language Instinct' Debate*. Continuum.
- Further texts will be made available online.

**Course Description:**

This course provides a survey of the cognitive, affective, and developmental constraints on language acquisition and use. Topics include multilingualism; language, mind and brain; language processing and comprehension; first and second language acquisition; and research tools.

Language is unique as an ability and behavior at the nexus of our biology, culture, and individuality. As such it is a fascinating topic of research, not least leading to insights into what it means to be human. I want to include your specific research interests and will identify and assign readings that will be relevant for that. One central topic will be the ongoing debate around the genetic foundations of language. Finally, we will look into a specific type of linguistic ability, humor, and as how it has been addressed in psycholinguistic research. You may be aware that psycholinguists research the cognitive processes underlying language acquisition and use with an emphasis on measuring language behavior objectively. This leads to a focus on statistical methods in this discipline, which I will aim to deemphasize in this course as much as possible.

**Course Objectives**

1. Students will become active participants in the course, not only in staying current with readings and other assignments, but in sharing their understanding of the material as assessed by written reading responses and participation in discussions.

2. Students will become familiar with basic concepts in psycholinguistics through readings from the textbook as well as current research in the field as assessed by reading responses summarizing and critically assessing the concepts and by their application of these concepts in their final research presentation and paper.
3. Students will be able to write and present research on and in psycholinguistics in an informed and critical way, in particular an assigned presentation and a final project on a topic selected in coordination with the instructor and pertaining to the course.
4. Students will present their research to their colleagues and, perhaps, broader audiences.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

### **Instructional Methods, Activities, and Assessments**

This course consists of a series of activities and assessments to assist you in achieving the outcomes and objectives of this course and instructional units/modules. By the end of this course the class will have read the textbooks and additional materials, including research papers. The class will have discussed the readings, responded to them in writing, and researched an issue in depth so as to be able to give a class presentation and write a final paper.

### **Weekly Readings, Responses, and Discussions**

For our weekly readings you are required to write short 1-page (300-400 words) responses addressing some aspect of the material that you find especially interesting. The main point is for you to think carefully about a particular issue. You can bolster the author's argument with additional information, point out shortcomings in the data or reasoning, show how the ideas don't fit with other pertinent information, raise important questions for further research, or simply describe why you found the reading intriguing (40% of course grade).

By the middle of the semester you will have identified a topic in psycholinguistics that you want to research in more detail. This research will result in a presentation in class and a 10-12pp research paper (40% of course grade).

Course participation accounts for 20% of the final course grade. To receive full participation credit students must participate in discussions consistently by providing substantive comments, which requires staying current with all readings and assignments.

**Student Learning Outcome #1:** Students will demonstrate their ability to synthesize ideas pertaining to the course as measured by a review of critical responses from the students.

**Student Learning Outcome #2:** Students will conduct research on an assigned topic and will present the findings of their research to the class through a presentation as well as write a research paper. The presentation should be delivered on the assigned date and should include the following elements:

- a substantial overview;
- a reference list (enumerative bibliography, discography, etc.);
- any additional relevant information that is appropriate to the topic.

**Student Learning Outcome #3:** Students will demonstrate their understanding of ideas pertaining to the course as measured by a review of each student's presentation on an assigned topic.

### **Grading**

Assignment and course grades will be determined by the student's performance on the following assignments:

- Critical response papers: 40% of total course grade
- Final presentation and paper: 40% of total course grade
- Participation: 20% of total course grade

*There will be no extra credit assignments. As a rule, I do not accept late work.*

### **Scale used to compute final letter grades:**

A: 100-90

B: 89-80

C: 79-70

D: 69-60

F: 59-0

<b>COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES</b>
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### **Course Specific Procedures:**

#### **Academic Honesty Policy**

Texas A&M University-Commerce does not tolerate **plagiarism** and other forms of **academic dishonesty**. Conduct that violates generally accepted standards of academic honesty is defined as academic dishonesty. "Academic dishonesty" includes, but is not limited to, plagiarism (the appropriation or stealing of the ideas or words of another person and passing them off as one's own), cheating on exams or other course assignments, collusion (the unauthorized collaboration with others in preparing course assignments), and abuse (destruction, defacing, or removal) of resource material. Instructors uphold and support the highest academic standards, and students are expected to do likewise. Penalties for students guilty of academic dishonesty include disciplinary probation, suspension and expulsion (Texas A&M University-Commerce Code of Student Conduct 5.b[1, 2, 3]). Cheating, including plagiarizing papers in whole or part, will result in a grade of zero (0) on the assignment for the first offense and failure of the course for any subsequent offenses.

#### **Attendance Policy**

Because your active participation in discussions is expected, attendance is vital for success in this course. Attendance requires more than simply coming to class.

#### **Assignment Policy**

I will provide specific details during class meetings and possibly by email. Students must stay current with all readings and discussions. Students must complete and submit all assignments by their respective due dates.

#### **Late Work**

I will not accept any assignment after its due date. Assignments submitted after the due date may receive a score of zero (0).

#### **Drop a Course**

A student may drop a course by logging into his/her myLEO account and clicking on the hyperlink labeled "Drop a class" from among the choices found under the myLeo section of the Web page.

#### Incompletes

Incompletes (grade of "X") are granted only under rare and extraordinary circumstances.

#### Administrative Withdrawal

I reserve the right to drop a student from the course administratively for excessive absences or violations of student conduct codes.

### **University Specific Procedures:**

#### *ADA Statement*

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

**Office of Student Disability Resources and Services**

**Texas A&M University-Commerce**

**Gee Library 132**

**Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835**

**Fax (903) 468-8148**

[StudentDisabilityServices@tamu-commerce.edu](mailto:StudentDisabilityServices@tamu-commerce.edu)

[Student Disability Resources & Services](#)

#### *Student Conduct*

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. (See *Code of Student Conduct from Student Guide Handbook*).

<b>TENTATIVE COURSE OUTLINE / CALENDAR</b>
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The following course schedule is subject to revisions and other modifications as the instructor deems necessary for the course. Any changes to the course schedule will be announced in advance of the week in which the change will occur.

	<b>Readings</b>	<b>Research Project</b>
Week 1	Course Introduction	
Week 2	Aitchison	
Week 3		
Week 4		
Week 5		Topic Proposal
Week 6	Pinker	
Week 7		Exploratory Bibliography
Week 8		
Week 9		Conferencing
Week 10		
Week 11	Sampson	Literature Review
Week 12		
Week 13	Conferencing	
Week 14	Presentations	
Week 15	Presentations	
Finals		