

LING499A Directed Studies in Linguistics: Seminar in Psycholinguistics
Fall 2008

University of Maryland, College Park

Lecture

Time: TuTh 11:00am – 12:15pm

Place: MMH 3418

Instructor Information

Instructor: Stacey Conroy

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Phone: 301-405-4192

Office hours: by appointment

Course Web Page: www.ling.umd.edu/~staceyc/Course.htm

Course Description

This seminar is a tour of the *science* of language and studying how it is acquired by children. Language is one of our most distinctive characteristics as humans, it is also one of our most misunderstood characteristics, and it is often the cause of heated conflict. Our goal in this class will be to step back from the fray and take a look at the objective facts about human language.

Except in case of severe brain damage, speaking a language is something that seems both effortless and intuitive for all adults. Similarly, any child can learn to speak any human language if the child is exposed to that language from an early age, with almost no direct teaching. [Reading and writing are a different matter!] And yet, a close look at any human language shows that it is an extremely sophisticated system. This suggests that there is something special about the human mind that makes it able to learn and use language. *Linguistics* aims to discover how human languages work (*any* language, not just English), and what it is about human minds that makes them able to learn and use language.

The major goal of this seminar is to acquire the skills necessary to read and evaluate original research articles. Most of the course will involve the discussion of current issues in the domain of language acquisition. At the conclusion of this course, you will write your own research proposal that addresses an open question in the domain of child language.

Above all, this is an advanced seminar. Therefore, the students in the class (that's you!) are responsible for driving the discussion.

Required Textbooks

Crain and Thornton 1998 **Investigations in Universal Grammar**

Most of this course will require reading original research articles, which will be made available online.

Student Responsibilities

You are expected to take responsibility for your own learning! Because this class is a seminar, we will cover a lot of material in a short time and it is important that you stay on top of the material.

Attend class. You will be responsible for all the material covered in class as well as in the readings. Although this course does not contain homeworks that check your progress, participating in class and understanding the discussion will be critical to your success on the paper assignments.

Complete papers thoroughly and on time. You have a limited number of graded assignments, so you are expected to spend time doing the research required to complete these assignments. Expect to begin planning for papers a few weeks in advance of the due date.

Communicate. If you have trouble with the course, if you have an emergency where you need to miss class, if you are experiencing an illness or any other situation which is interfering with your ability to participate fully in the course, make sure you contact me as soon as possible to let me know what is happening. There can be no adjustments to grades or accommodations made that will affect your grade after grades are assigned; you must keep informed about how you are doing and talk to me about any kind of special situation well in advance of the end of the course.

Come to office hours. Office hours are designed for students to come and get extra help, to talk in greater detail about interesting ideas, or to give feedback about the class. Make use of them! Please plan ahead and give yourself plenty of time to complete assignments. It is **highly recommended** that you come talk to me in advance of your presentation in class.

Participate in class discussions with thoughtful and constructive comments and questions. Please ask questions in class if there is something you do not understand.

Avoid disruptive or distracting behavior. Be respectful to your instructor and peers and sensitive to the needs of those around you. Ordinarily, cell phones should be turned off in class. If you are expecting a phone call because of an urgent matter, please turn the phone to vibrate.

Evaluation

Presentation	40%
Review Paper	30%
Research Proposal	30%

Presentation You will present an article in class. Everyone is responsible for reading every article assigned in the course, and your presentation is designed to clarify the issues in your assigned article for the rest of the class. The grading rubric is below. Your presentation should not simply be a restatement of the article: please keep in mind that all of your classmates will have read it! However, you will have been the one that has read the article most thoroughly, so it is your goal to highlight the key points in the article, clarify issues that may have been confusing, and discuss problems and implications of the article.

Reading original research articles is difficult! I do not expect you to be able to understand everything the first time you read the article. Expect to read the article you are presenting about 3 times in order to understand most of it. Also, I **highly recommend** that you come and talk to me! Ideally, you would talk to me twice: once about your understanding of the article, and a second time about what you will present. This is not required, but I am here to help you, so make use of my time ✍

Plan to talk for about 30-45 minutes. In reality, the presentation will most likely take the entire course, as your classmates will ask questions, and there will be discussion. However, you will be graded on the content of your 45 minute presentation.

Because each student will be presenting a paper, the schedule of the course largely revolves around the student presentations. No early or late make-up presentations will be accepted – if you miss one, you will receive a “0” on it. Exceptions will be made only in the case of serious, *documented* emergencies that are communicated to me in a timely manner. Therefore, it is crucial that you plan on being prepared on the day you have a presentation!

Presentation Rubric (100 points total)

- Background Review (10 points)
- Research Question (10 points) *This means a clear explanation of why the researchers are investigating this issue, and what they want to find out*
- Hypotheses (20 points) *There are always two hypotheses in a paper, you need to tell us about what they are!*
- Predictions of **each** hypothesis (20 points)
- Experimental Methodology (10 points)
- Results/Data (10 points)
- Conclusions (10 points) *What did they conclude and why?*
- Expand beyond conclusions (10 points) *Were their conclusions warranted? Were there any problems in their design? How does this relate to other papers we have read?*

Review Paper. You will find your own original research paper (hopefully related to something we are doing in class) and write a review of the paper. This is very similar to the presentation, except that it is written.

There is no strict page limit, as the paper will be graded on the rubric below. However, for most writers, a paper around 5-7 double spaced pages will be required to cover the topics sufficiently.

Because you are picking your own paper, it is recommended that you come and talk to me about what you choose. Also, it would be easiest (for you) if you choose this review paper on the same topic that you want to write your research proposal on. This way, you can use the review paper as part of the background research for your proposal.

Review Paper Rubric (100 points total)

- Background Review (10 points)
- Research Question (10 points) *This means a clear explanation of why the researchers are investigating this issue, and what they want to find out*
- Hypotheses (15 points) *There are always two hypotheses in a paper, you need to tell us about what they are!*
- Predictions of **each** hypothesis (15 points)
- Experimental Methodology (10 points)
- Results/Data (10 points)
- Conclusions (10 points) *What did they conclude and why?*
- Expand beyond conclusions (10 points) *Were their conclusions warranted? Were there any problems in their design? How does this relate to other papers we have read?*
- Clarity of written paper (10 points) *I prefer that your paper is clear and concise!*

Resesarch Proposal. You will write a proposal for an experiment. This requires selecting a topic that interests you, and reading at least 2 research papers as background. In this paper, you should review these papers (although, not in as much detail as you do for the review paper), and identify what questions are still open in that domain. Then, propose an experiment and explain how you are attempting to answer the open question.

As always, talking to me is a good idea.

Research Proposal Rubric (100 points total)

- Background Review (25 points) *This means briefly reviewing 2 papers (it is fine if one of them is what you used for the review paper, but you will need to edit the text of your review paper). You need to be clear and consise!*
- What problem still exists? (10 points)
- Research Question (10 points) *This is a statement of YOUR research goal.*
- Hypotheses (10 points) *You need to outline what the two possible hypotheses are. At least one hypothesis should be supported by previous research! The second one may be your own, or it may be the position held by other researchers.*

- Predictions of **each** hypothesis (10 points)
- Experimental Proposal (10 points) *You should include what methodology you have chosen and why. A discussion of why you did not choose other methods (i.e. why they would not be suitable for your research question) would be helpful in some cases. If you create your own methodology, you need to explain its advantages over existing methods.*
- Example Results (10 points) *What would the possible results say about your hypotheses? Spell out how different results would bear on your predictions.*
- Problems still open (5 points) *What problems can't you address with your experiment? One experiment can't solve everything, so be open about this!*
- Clarity of written paper (10 points) *I prefer that your paper is clear and concise!*

Extra credit. There is no possibility for extra credit in this course. You should focus on learning the course material and put effort into your assignments. If you are having trouble with anything, make sure you come talk to me immediately.

Grading scale. The grades are not on a curve, so you are not competing against your classmates. This means it is possible for everyone to get an A! It also means it is possible that you will earn a C in the course.

98-100	A+	73-79	C+
93-97	A	73-76	C
90-92	A-	70-72	C-
87-89	B+	67-69	D+
83-86	B	63-66	D
80-82	B-	60-62	D-
		59 and below	F

Attendance Policy

Religious holidays. The University of Maryland's policy provides that students should not be penalized because of observances of their religious beliefs. Students shall be given an opportunity, whenever feasible, to make up within a reasonable time any academic assignment that is missed due to individual participation in religious observances. It is the student's responsibility to inform the instructor of any intended absences for religious observances *before* the day to be missed.

Snow Policy. On days which the university is closed for weather reasons, class is cancelled. Presentations will be shifted

Academic Honesty

You can learn a lot from talking with others, however, you must follow acceptable practices of academic honesty. If you work with someone else, you should do the following:

- Write up your assignment *yourself*, even if you have worked on it as part of a group. If you have edited or simply copied your friend's assignment, then you have not written up your assignment yourself.
- Don't hand in something that your group worked on that you don't fully understand - this is plagiarism, and it is dishonest.
- When working from research articles, you cannot copy sentences from the research article. Writing a similar sentence, changing a couple of words, is still plagiarism! If you are writing something in a paper, it must be your own words, and you must understand it!
- Anything that you did not know before you started the course (unless I taught it in lecture) needs to be cited. For example, even if you look something up on Wikipedia, you need to cite that you acquired information from that source. (as an aside, Wikipedia is not a good research tool!)
- If you work as part of a group, you **must write this at the top of your assignment**, and give the names of the people you worked with. If you fail to do this, it will be treated as plagiarism.
- If you are in any doubt, consult the [University Policy on Academic Integrity](#). I will treat any cases of academic dishonesty **seriously**. That means you will be reported to the University Honor Board.

We follow the University's policies on academic honesty and will report any form of cheating according to these policies. Please review the terms and penalties of the Student Honor Council's Code of Academic Integrity at: <http://www.shc.umd.edu/code.html>. According to this code plagiarism is defined as "intentionally or knowingly representing the words or ideas of another as one's own in any academic exercise." This is regarded as a form of academic dishonesty and suspected cases of plagiarism will be referred to the Honor Code for subsequent action. The grade of XF is listed on the transcripts of individuals found to have plagiarized work; this grade means an F was received because of academic dishonesty."

In accord with the Code, students will be required to write and sign the following statement on each exam, quiz and assignment:

I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this examination (or assignment).

Students with Disabilities

If you have a physical disability or a learning disability, it is your responsibility to bring it to my attention at the beginning of the course – before any exams or assignments are due. I will make every effort to accommodate your needs.

CORE Distributive Studies

You may have chosen this course as part of your CORE Liberal Arts and Sciences Studies Program, the general education portion of your degree program. CORE Distributive Studies are designed to ensure that you will take a look at several different academic disciplines and the way they create and analyze knowledge about the world.

Want more linguistics?

If you find yourself really enjoying linguistics, consider pursuing linguistics as your major or minor (if you are not already doing so). Talk to me or to Dr. Tonia Bleam (tbleam@umd.edu), the Linguistics undergraduate director. You should also check out the Linguistics Undergraduate Association and our undergraduate pages.

Experiments

If you might be interested in participating in a linguistics experiment (being a subject), contact me or go to: <http://umlinguistics.sona-systems.com>. Here you can sign up for any of the experiments listed. Participants are paid \$10/hour.

Schedule

The schedule below is a tentative outline of the course. The schedule of topics is subject to change over the course of the semester. It is assumed that you will do the reading that is being presented in class. Readings that are listed are additional readings that should be done for the day listed. **Bold** items are student presentations. IUG stands for Investigations in Universal Grammar. SLS stands for Second Language Syntax, and these readings will be available on the webpage.

Week	Date	Topic	Add'l Reading	Due
1	Sept 2	Intro. to class MG vs. UG		
	Sept 4	Poverty of the Stimulus Constructionism	<u>IUG</u> pg. 9-44 <u>SLS</u> pg. 4-7 Tomasello (2003) pg. 1-7, 94-143	
2	Sept 9	Finish constructionism Database day		
	Sept 11	Savage et al. (2006)		
3	Sept 16	Wanna contraction intro Elicited Production	<u>IUG</u> pg. 142-149 pg. 178-185	
	Sept 19	Thornton (1990) pg. 46-70		
4	Sept 23	Zukowski and Larsen		
	Sept 25	L2 wanna contraction- Kweon (2001)		
5	Sept 30	Intro to elicitation	<u>IUG</u> pg. 187-198	

			Thornton (1990) pg. 211-321	
	Oct 2	German Syntax	McDaniel (1989)	
6	Oct 7	L2 medial wh- Schultz (2007)		
	Oct 9	Finish medial-wh		
7	Oct 14	Questions intro		Review Paper
	Oct 16	Why questions- Thornton (2007)		
8	Oct 21	Inversion in Questions- Ambridge (2006)		
	Oct 23	L2 question acquisition Eckman (1989)	<u>SLS</u> pg. 146-153	
9	Oct 28	Finish Questions		
	Oct 30	Binding Principles Acquisition of constraints	Thornton & Wexler (1998) pg. 1-14	
10	Nov 4	TVJT	<u>IUG</u> pg. 210-237	
	Nov 6	Principle B- Thornton & Wexler (1998) pg. 131-144, 160-177	<u>IUG</u> pg. 265-274	
11	Nov 11	Principle C in Russian- Kazanina & Philips (2004)		
	Nov 13	Finish binding		
12	Nov 18	Intro to islands		
	Nov 20	Long distance rules	DeVilliers, Roeper and Vainikka (1990)	
13	Nov 25	Abdulkarim, Roeper & DeVilliers (1997)		
	Nov 27	**no class**		
14	Dec 2	L2 islands- Johnson & Newport (1991)	<u>SLS</u> pg. 267-288	
	Dec 4	Finish islands		
15	Dec 9	Student proposals		
	Dec 11	Student proposals		

Our Final exam time is: **Monday, Dec 15 8:00am-10:00 am**

This is when your final papers are due. They must be either on my desk or in my email inbox by 10:00am. Late papers will not be accepted.