Ling 97r: Major Themes in the Generative Era
Instructor: Bridget Samuels (bdsamuel@fas)
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This course is intended to provide an overview of important, ongoing debates in linguistics and cognitive science more broadly—all of which remain areas of active investigation and spirited controversy. A subsidiary goal of the tutorial is to guide students through what may be their first experience reading primary-source linguistic literature. Additionally, a major aim is to help students integrate their knowledge of the various subfields of linguistics (and/or provide a matrix for future exposure to these fields). To this end, we will focus on themes that cross-cut disciplinary boundaries and on ways in which different fields both within and outside linguistics have influenced each other.

Requirements:
Participation: 25%; discussion leading: 25%; final paper: 50%
Each class meeting will be a roundtable discussion of multiple viewpoints concerning a central theme/debate. As part of this process, readings will be divided among the students, who will present summaries of the main arguments and pose questions for general discussion. The course will culminate with each student writing a paper (~10 pages) on a topic suitable to the student’s interests and background, selected with the instructor’s guidance. A paper may, for example, explore a debate which we have not discussed or research one of the themes discussed in class in further detail.

WEEK 1
Behaviorism vs. Innatism
Introduction to the course. No readings due.

WEEK 2
Modularity & Domain-Specificity

- Bromberger & Halle (1989) “Why phonology is different”

WEEK 3
Evolution of Language

- Hauser, Chomsky, & Fitch (2002); Fitch, Hauser, & Chomsky (2005)
- Boeckx (To appear) “Some reflections on Darwin’s problem”
WEEK 4
Animal Cognition

- Anderson (2004) *Dr. Dolittle’s Delusion* (selections)
- Cheney & Seyfarth (2007) *Baboon Metaphysics* (selections)

WEEK 5
Rationalism vs. Empiricism Redux

- Boeckx (To appear) “Linguistic minimalism”

WEEK 6
Linguistics, neuroscience, & genetics

- Fodor (1999) “Let your mind alone”
- Poeppel (2004) “Interdisciplinary cross-fertilization or cross-sterilization?”
- van der Lely (2005) “Domain-specific cognitive systems: insight from gSLI”
- Vernes et al. (2008) “A functional genetic link…”
- Stromswold (2008) “The genetics of speech & language impairments”