LING440: Grammars and Cognition  
Fall 2017

Time: Tues-Thurs 3:30-4:45  
Place: 3416K Marie Mount Hall

Instructor: Dr. Ellen Lau  
Office: MMH 3416  
Email: ellenlau@umd.edu  
Office hours: Wed. 1:00-2:00 or by appt

Course website: [http://ling.umd.edu/~ellenlau/courses/ling440/LING440_F17.html](http://ling.umd.edu/~ellenlau/courses/ling440/LING440_F17.html)

Course description:  
This course examines the cognitive and neural mechanisms by which humans make use of their linguistic knowledge in language production and comprehension. We will discuss how production and comprehension are accomplished in real time, how infants acquire knowledge of their language, and how this knowledge and these processes are implemented neurobiologically. We will consider the strengths and weaknesses of the methodologies used to examine these questions. Evidence will include acoustic analysis, behavioral responses and brain measures, some of which will be gathered or analyzed by students. The course requirements will involve reading from the primary literature, lab assignments, an experimental proposal, and two exams. **In Fall 2017 there will be a special theme running throughout the course on language processing in adult bilinguals/late second language learners.**

The goal outcomes of this course are to:

--- Learn key findings about a central area of human cognition: language processing  
--- Learn how to be an informed and critical audience of scientific research  
--- Learn how to deconstruct the logic of an argument  
--- Learn/practice basic expository writing  
--- Learn how to read a research report  
--- Learn how to write a research report  
--- Learn principles of good experiment design  
--- Learn how to ask and answer new research questions about human cognition

Materials:  
There is no textbook for this course. Primary readings will be distributed electronically on the instructor’s course website, and book chapters will be available on Canvas. The schedule is subject to change, so make sure to check it frequently.

More generally, note that for reasons of public accessibility, the schedule, lab assignments, and most readings are available through the course website listed above, and NOT on ELMS. However, for reasons of bureaucratic convenience, all assignments will be submitted through ELMS (this is also where the discussion questions for the readings will be found).

Reading Responses:  
For almost every class you will be responsible for submitting responses to discussion questions on the readings on Canvas or occasionally on paper. Your response must answer ALL aspects of the discussion question to receive full credit. You are welcome to additionally include any questions you had about the reading. Electronic responses are due by **9pm** the night before class; late reading responses receive no credit.
Lab assignments:
Four labs will be assigned across the course of the semester. Labs are also due by 9pm.

Lab 1a/b – Production Errors
   1a – Keep a diary of speech errors for one week
   1b – Review the collected speech errors from the class and discuss possible conclusions

Lab 2 – Sentence comprehension and memory
   Collect behavioral data in class and write up the results in a brief research report format

Lab 3 – Speech perception
   Use Praat to make recordings of your speech and analyze properties of your utterances

Lab 4 – Sentence processing
   4a – Create materials for a behavioral sentence processing experiment to be run on MTurk
   4b – Analyze the data and report on the results

Experiment proposal:
You will come up with an idea for a psycholinguistic experiment of your own, examining a topic of your choice, and write a research proposal describing the planned experiment.

Class participation:
In a number of classes across the semester, we will break out into groups for part of the class for focused discussion on a problem or a point of debate. I will also often ask you to answer a brief thought question at the beginning or end of the class. Participation in these activities will fulfill your class participation grade.

Evaluation:
20% - Reading responses
20% - Lab Assignments
15% - Experiment proposal
10% - Class participation
15% - Midterm Exam
20% - Final Exam

Please email any questions about assignments to me in sufficient time! Not understanding the assignment or not being able to access the assignment (when you have not asked for help reasonably in advance) is not an acceptable excuse.

Lateness policy:
Reading responses will not be accepted (at all) after 9pm the night before class. Lab assignments turned in late will receive a 10% penalty in grade unless due to a documented personal emergency, and will not be accepted more than 2 days after the due date. Disrupted internet access is not an acceptable excuse for turning in an assignment late, so if you have concerns about this you should submit your assignment ahead of time.

Class participation
Because most of the reading is from the primary literature and the lectures serve to unpack it and contextualize it, you probably will not get a lot out of this course if you don’t regularly attend class and participate in class discussion. My pet peeve is surfing/working on your laptop/phone while other people are talking, so please don’t do it in this class. Life is too short to spend it somewhere else!

Student Responsibilities:
The success of a course is the responsibility of both the instructor and the students.
Avoid disruptive or distracting behavior. Be respectful to those around you. **Cell phones should be turned off during class** (people with potential emergencies can leave their phones on vibrate.) Inappropriate behaviors during class include: reading newspapers, reading your email, engaging in private conversations with your neighbors, sleeping.

**Reading email or surfing the internet during classes or talks is my pet peeve, and I ask you not to do it here.** Because I know myself how difficult it is not to be distracted by a screen, and because recent research indicates that note-taking on paper is more effective than on keyboard, I ask that students not use laptops in this class unless you email me individually for an exception.

**Attend class.** You will be responsible for all the material covered in class as well as in the readings.

**Complete assignments** thoroughly and on time. This is a hands-on course where you will learn to think critically about the primary literature and work with a variety of psycholinguistic techniques. It is crucial that you do the readings and the lab reports on time in order to be successful in the course. Later material will build on earlier material.

**Communicate.** If you have any trouble with the course, if you have an emergency where you need to miss class (especially more than one class), or if you are experiencing an illness or any other situation which is interfering with your ability to participate fully in the course, make sure that you contact the instructor as soon as possible. Letting us know of a problem in a timely manner helps to make sure that we can accommodate your needs. There can be no adjustments to grades or accommodations made that will affect your grade once the semester is completed. Therefore, you MUST keep us informed and talk to us about any kind of special situation well in advance.

**Come see us.** If you would like to simply talk about the material covered in class more in depth or if you are having any difficulty in the course, please come to office hours or make an appointment with the instructor or TA.

**Participate** in class discussion with thoughtful and constructive comments and questions. Participating in class is valuable because it helps you to be an active listener and increases the likelihood that you will understand and retain the material. Please ask questions in class.

**Time commitment.** You should expect to have to actively prepare for every single class, spending 2-3 hours outside of class for each hour in class. Reading an article does not just mean skimming it once. You may have to read several times, take notes, look up words you don’t know, etc., in order to understand a journal article.

**Grading scale.** The grades are not on a curve, so you are not competing against your classmates.

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**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 the university is closed due to inclement weather, class is cancelled. However, subsequent days will not be altered. For example: if there is a test on Friday, and school is cancelled on Thursday, the test will still be on Friday. It is up to you to email questions you have in preparation for the test.

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. If you require special accommodations for test-taking, you need to arrange for this at least one week before a scheduled exam, and then also remind me by email a day or two before the exam.

Academic Honesty:
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.”

You can learn a lot from working through problems with others, and for this reason collaboration on lab assignments is encouraged in this course. However, collaboration can only work effectively if you do so responsibly, and follow acceptable practices of academic honesty. If you work together, you should:

- Write up your assignment yourself. 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 collaborator came up with that you don't fully understand - this is plagiarism, and it is dishonest.

- 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. We treat cases of academic dishonesty seriously.