LING440: Grammars and Cognition
Fall 2018

Time: Tues-Thurs 3:30-4:45
Place: 1304 Marie Mount Hall

Instructor: Dr. Ellen Lau
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Office: MMH 3416
Office hours: Wed. 1:30-2:30 or by appt

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Email: cliao@umd.edu
Office: MMH 3416
Office hours:

Course website: http://ling.umd.edu/~ellenlau/courses/ling440/LING440_F18.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. We will discuss how the linguistics tradition in particular provides a necessary foundation for building theories of these cognitive and neural mechanisms. 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. **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 most classes 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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**University Policies:**
Broader university policies relevant to Undergraduate Courses are found here:
http://ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html. Topics that are addressed in these various policies include academic integrity, student and instructor conduct, accessibility and accommodations, attendance and excused absences, grades and appeals, copyright and intellectual property.