LING440 Grammars and Cognition:
Spring 2013

Time: Mo We 9:30 – 10:45am
Place: TYD 1118

Instructor: Ellen Lau
Office: MMH 3416
Email: ellenlau@umd.edu
Office hours: Thurs. 2-3:15 and by appt.

TA: Dave Kush
Office: MMH 1413H
Email: kush@umd.edu
Office hours: Thurs. 11-12 and by appt.

Course website: http://ling.umd.edu/~ellenlau/courses/ling440/LING440_S13.html

Course description:
This course provides an overview of research that investigates the mechanisms by which humans use language in production and comprehension. We will discuss how production and comprehension are accomplished in real time, how infants and second-language learners acquire knowledge of their language, and how this knowledge and these processes are implemented neurobiologically. At the same time, 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, participating in class discussions, lab assignments, and completing two exams.

Materials:
The textbook for the course is Introduction to Psycholinguistics by Matt Traxler. Primary readings will be distributed electronically on the course website. The schedule is subject to change, so make sure to check it frequently.

Reading Responses:
For almost every class you will be responsible for submitting responses to the readings by email to the TA. You should write at least a short paragraph for each response question. You are welcome to additionally include any questions you had about the reading. Responses are due by 8pm the night before class.

Lab assignments:
Five labs will be assigned across the course of the semester. Labs are always due by Friday at midnight.

Lab 1a/b – Production
  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 – Speech perception
  Use Praat to make recordings of your speech and analyze properties of your utterances
Lab 3 – Lexical access
  3a – Load semantic priming EEG dataset into Matlab plug-in EEGLAB/ERPLAB
  3b – Apply preprocessing steps to the EEG dataset and report on the effects observed
Lab 4 – Sentence processing
  4a – Collect data from yourself on a behavioral sentence processing experiment
  4b – Analyze the class’s collected data and report on the results
Lab 5 – Design a novel experiment
  Provide a brief write-up of a new idea for a psycholinguistic experiment

Please email any questions about assignments to us in sufficient time! Not understanding the assignment (when you have not asked for help) is not an acceptable excuse.
Learning Outcome Goals:
After taking this class, you should be able to
- understand the theories and debates motivating current psycholinguistic research
- critically evaluate hypotheses about how language is processed and assess the data that supports them
- read and evaluate journal articles from the primary literature
- construct potential experimental designs that provide a test of a hypothesis
- determine which research methods would be appropriate for investigating a particular question
- consider the relationship between theories of grammar and theories of processing

Evaluation:
10% - Class participation
25% - Reading responses
25% - Lab Assignments
15% - Midterm Exam
25% - Final Exam

Lateness policy:
Reading responses will not be accepted after 8pm 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.

Student Responsibilities:
You are expected to take responsibility for your own learning! (The instructor’s job is to facilitate that learning process and provide you with resources.)

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 or the TA 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/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.

Avoid disruptive or distracting behavior. Be respectful to your instructors and peers and sensitive to the needs of 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.

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.”

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).”

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.