

Language, Mind, and Society

LING 301; Spring 2011
TTh 10:15-11:15; Location: Candler 101

Contact Information:

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Course Content & Objectives:

Why is language structured the way it is? How and why is it limited in what it can express? Answers to questions such as these usually stem from two opposing views. One focuses on language and meaning as products of how the mind works. The other stresses language as a product of social interaction. In this course, we will consider a series of questions to better understand these two views. Topics will include what the sources of linguistic structure might be; whether (or how much of) language is innate in humans; how language reflects categories, and helps us form categories; how our use of language is informed by shared schemas.

Furthermore, underlying all of the other guiding questions for the semester is one specific question: “What is language.” You will quickly realize that this is not an easy question, and in order to get a better grasp of the answer(s), we will approach the question from multiple view points, including:

- Language as a social entity
- Language as a biological construct
- Language as a reflection of identity
- Language as a reflection of thought
- Language as a singularly human trait
- Language as a transmitter of information
- Language as a cognitive construct or event

Required Texts:

- Dunbar, Dunbar, Robin. (1996). *Grooming, Gossip, and the Evolution of Language*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Lakoff, George and Mark Johnson. (1980). *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- All other readings are on electronic reserve. You can access Reserves Direct through: <https://ereserves.library.emory.edu/reserves2/index.php>

Recommended Texts:

- Pinker, Steven. (1994). *The Language Instinct*. New York: Will. Morrow & Co.
- Saussure, Ferdinand. (1916/1959). *Course in General Linguistics*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Course Requirements & Policies:

1. You are expected to come prepared to discuss the readings assigned each day. Make sure to bring the appropriate readings to class. In the remote chance you are absent, you are responsible for any material or announcements you miss.
2. **All assigned work must be completed on time.** If you miss class the day an assignment is due, you should make arrangements so that the instructor receives your work **before** class. Please refer to the grading policy for more information.
3. There is a **Blackboard** site set up for the class (www.classes.emory.edu) as well as a LearnLink conference. It is your responsibility to check for notes and announcements on a **daily** basis. You are also expected to contribute to on-line discussions.
4. Students with disabilities: Emory University complies with the regulations of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and offers accommodations to students with disabilities. All students with special requests or need for accommodations should make this request in person, with appropriate documentation, **within two weeks** of the beginning of the course. <http://ods.emory.edu/>
5. **Students will follow the Emory Honor Code.**
http://college.emory.edu/current/standards/honor_code.html. It is your obligation to familiarize yourself with the Code. Student collaboration is not permitted, unless otherwise noted. It is expected that the work that you do for this course is your own original work and that this work does not duplicate either in part or whole work that you have done or will do for another course, unless there is approval of both professors. Using someone else's work in a verbatim form or in paraphrased form without giving proper credit is plagiarism. Please refer to the class writing guide for more information.
6. Student responsibility: You will be expected to take responsibility for your performance in this class. You are responsible for keeping up with all information presented in texts, in lectures, and on Blackboard and LearnLink, for asking questions about aspects of assignments that you do not understand, for knowing and adhering to all course and university policies, for managing your time effectively, and for saving and backing up written documents to minimize assignment loss due to computer crises.
7. Questions about the course? Check the syllabus, LL, and the Blackboard site first. A good 90% of your questions can be answered in one of these places.

Composition of Final Grade:

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| • Participation | 20% | • Semester Project Assignments | 15% |
| • 4 Analytical Essays | 40% | • Final Paper | 20% |
| • 1 Essay Revision | 5% | | |

- Details for each assignment will be given separately and will be posted on Blackboard. All assignments are to be submitted through Blackboard and are to follow the course writing guide, unless otherwise stated. If you are having technical issues and BB is not working properly for you, make sure to email or hand in a hard copy of the assignment before deadline.
- All students are required to meet with one of the course instructors at least once during the semester for an independent writing workshop. This is a part of your participation grade.
- There will be a trip to the High Museum scheduled for one afternoon during the semester, day to be determined. This trip is strongly recommended, but not required.

Grading Policies:

- Late assignments will be lowered **5 points** for every calendar day they are late, unless you have received approval from Dr. Tamasi **before** the deadline (note: requests are not guaranteed approval). Assignments are due at the beginning of class; any assignment turned in after the start of class on the day it is due is considered late and will receive 5 points off. No assignment will be accepted more than 7 days past the due date.
- An evaluation of what might broadly be called “class participation” accounts for 20% of your final grade. Considerations that are relevant include promptness, attendance, quantity and quality of both contributions and questions in class sessions, and discussions outside of class.
- It is your personal responsibility to keep up with your grades throughout the semester. All grades will be posted on the BB site. Please expect 1-2 weeks turn-around time for grades on assignments.
- Please note that due to federal privacy laws, we can only discuss your grades with you in person. We cannot discuss grades over email or by phone or with another person (student, parent, etc.). If you wish to talk about a grade, please come to office hours or set an appointment.
- There will be no bonus assignments given to individuals; however, we *may* assign extra credit to the entire class. These opportunities will be posted on LL / BB.
- In tallying final grades for the class, please note that we round to the nearest integer. (An 89.4 is a B+; an 89.5 rounds to an A-). We do not curve grades.
- Final Grade distribution: A 100-93; A- 92-90; B+ 89-87; B 86-83; B- 82-80; C+ 79-77; C 76-73; C- 72-70; D 69-60; F 59-0.

Class Schedule (subject to change):

I. What are the sources of linguistic structure?

- Th 1/13 Introduction; Writing Assignment: *What is language?*
- T 1/18 Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, p. 8-20
Recommended Reading: Daniels, “Nine Ideas About Language”
- Th 1/20 Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, p. 65-78
 Yule, *The Study of Language*, “Animals and Human Language”
- T 1/25 Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* p. 2-21 (sections 1-47)
- Th 1/27 Chomsky, *Knowledge of Language*
 - TBARecommended Reading:
 Yule, *The Study of Language*, Ch. 8 & 9, “Grammar” & “Syntax”
- T 2/1 Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, Lectures I & II
- Th 2/3 Writing Workshop (Bring two copies of your essay to class with you)

II. How do children acquire language?

- T 2/8 Dunbar, *Grooming, Gossip, and the Evolution of Language*
 - Chpt. 4, “Of Brains and Groups and Evolution”
 - Chpt. 6, “Up Through the Mists of Time”
- Th 2/10 Dunbar, *Grooming, Gossip, and the Evolution of Language*
 - Chpt. 7, “First Words”
 - Chpt. 8, “Babel’s Legacy”
- T 2/15 Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* p. 80-94 (sections 197-269)
- Th 2/17 Chomsky, *Reflections on Language*
 - Chpt. 1, “On Cognitive Capacity,” p. 3-35
- T 2/22 Pinker, *The Language Instinct*
 - Chpt. 1, “An Instinct to Acquire and Art”
 - Chpt. 2, “Chatterboxes”
- Th 2/24 Tomasello, “Language is Not an Instinct”
 Dalrymple, “The Gift of Language: No, Dr. Pinker, it’s not just from nature”

T 3/1 Zlatev, *Situated Embodiment*, Chpt. 2, “Theoretical Background”
Christiansen, TBA

III. Words as category labels: Are the categories “out there” in the world, or in our minds?

Th 3/3 Whorf, *Language, Thought, and Reality*, “The relation of habitual thought and behavior to language”

Recommended Reading: Martin, “Eskimo Words for Snow”

March 7-11 *Spring Break – No class*

T 3/15 Ungerer & Schmid, *An Introduction to Cognitive Linguistics*,
• Chpt. 1, “Prototypes and categories,” Parts 1.1, 1.2, 1.3

Th 3/17 Taylor, *Linguistic Categorization*,
• Chpt. 2, “The classical approach to categorization”

T 3/22 Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things*, Chpt. 6, “Radial categories”

IV. How do we make sense out of what people say?

Th 3/24 Lakoff & Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, p. 1-55

T 3/29 Lakoff & Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, p. 56-114

Th 3/31 Class visit by Prof. Mark Johnson
Lakoff & Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, p. 115-155

T 4/5 Schon, “Generative metaphor: A perspective on problem-setting in social policy”

Th 4/7 Gilbert, *Stumbling on Happiness*,
• “The View from in Here”
• “Outside Looking In”

T 4/12 Lakoff, “Metaphor & War: The metaphor system used to justify war in the gulf”
Pinker, “Block that metaphor” (read after Lakoff)

V. How does social interaction affect language use?

Th 4/14 Tabouret-Keller, “Language and identity”

T 4/19 Bucholtz, “Why be normal?: Language and identity practices in a community of
nerd girls”

Th 4/21 Kiesling, “Dude”

TBA (Final Exam Period) Final papers are due
(Early submissions are strongly encouraged.)