

PSYCHOLOGY OF LANGUAGE #40461-001, FALL 2006

Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays 11:00-11:50
Kent Hall Addition, Room #101

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OFFICE HOURS: Mondays 8:30-10:30, Wednesdays 8:30-10:30, or by appointment. I strongly encourage you to take advantage of this resource.

COURSE TEXTBOOK: Carroll (2004), *Psychology of Language* (4th Ed), Thomson-Wadsworth. For additional reading, I would recommend Altmann (1997), *The Ascent of Babel*, Oxford.

COURSE SUMMARY: On one hand, language is a fundamental part of our daily lives. On the other hand, most people take it completely for granted, never considering how complex and amazing human language processing really is. For most of us, we perform language functions quickly and easily every day with little thought about how they happen.

To paraphrase one of psychology's forefathers, the goal of psychology is to make the mysterious seem commonplace and the commonplace seem mysterious. In this spirit, I intend this course to help you understand and appreciate the mysteries of language processing. You should come away from this course with an understanding of the many different psychological processes involved in language, theories about how those processes work (and why they don't sometimes), and the key findings from language research.

ASSIGNMENTS: A brief editorial: Personally, I don't like grades. I think they distract students from the real purpose of education—namely, education. That is, a student's ultimate goal becomes getting a grade, rather than expanding one's knowledge about the world. Unfortunately, grading is an unavoidable component of the higher education system in our country, and so this course must have means of evaluating what you're learning. To this end:

- **EXAMINATIONS:** Four exams will be administered, three during the semester plus a comprehensive final. Each exam is initially worth 100 points, but whichever of your four exams has the lowest grade will be weighted less than the others in your final grade (by 50%). Thus, all together, the four exams are worth 350 points.
- **DAILY REVIEWS:** One of the very best ways to learn new information is to SELF-TEST. To help you do this, I will ask short review questions at the beginning of each class, which will give you a chance to test yourself on content that we covered in previous classes. You will write down your answers and turn them in. Over the course of the semester, you will earn 2 points for each day you turn in responses, up to 50 points. The review questions will be given promptly at the start of class, so it behooves you to be punctual (you only receive credit for a day if you are there to respond to all of the questions). Note that you earn 2 points just for turning in responses. The daily reviews really are just to help you practice recalling information you've learned (which will drastically improve your memory for that information), so you're not punished for not knowing an answer.
- **EXTRA CREDIT:** However, you will be rewarded if you do know all the answers on a daily review. Over the course of the semester, I will pseudo-randomly select 10 days for which I will grade the daily reviews, and you will earn 2 extra credit point each time you are able to answer all questions correctly (up to 20 extra credit points). Here's the logic: Waiting until the night before an exam and then studying in one big long chunk is not a

very good way to support long-term learning. It is much better to study repeatedly, in short sessions that are separated in time. Thus, I would recommend that you ‘study’ for a short time each night before the next day of class (or at least in the morning before class). Those who do this are more likely to get all of the daily review questions right, and I’ll give you extra credit to encourage this good study habit.

Thus, your final grade will be computed based on a total of 400 points – 350 from exams and 50 from daily reviews.

A = 90-100% (358-400 points)

B = 80-89% (318-357 points)

C = 70-79% (278-317 points)

D = 60-69% (238-277 points)

F = (< 238), but I don’t expect anyone to get an F in this class!

With all that said, I really want you to focus on LEARNING in this class, not on GRADES. I will do what I can to help you focus on learning and not so much on grades. If you are willing to put the work in to learn (because learning does take work), you will get the grade you want.

COURSE POLICIES: I do not take attendance, although I STRONGLY encourage you to attend class regularly. Each student has a responsibility to be considerate of the other students in the class by minimizing disruptions: Cell phones, pagers, etc. MUST be turned off. Coming in to class late is distracting to others, so please be on time. Engaging in non-class activities (e.g., napping, reading the newspaper) is also distracting, so I expect you to be attending to the class if you come to class. Finally, concerning my policy on missed exams: If you know in advance that you will not be able to take an exam, you may arrange to take the exam early. Otherwise, all make-up exams will be given during the final exam period on December 11 (you would take your make-up exam immediately after completing the final). Make-up exams will not be the same test version as the original exam, and may not be the same format. I STRONGLY DISCOURAGE YOU FROM MISSING EXAMS!

I expect that all students know and will adhere to the university’s honor code, and your continued enrollment in this class is taken as your agreement with this policy. The minimum penalty for failing to adhere to this honor code is an F in the course. If you are not familiar with the university’s policy, you should visit <http://imagine.kent.edu/policyreg> and search on Policy # 3342-3-07.

University policy 3342-3-18 requires that students with disabilities be provided reasonable accommodations to ensure their equal access to course content. If you have a documented disability and require accommodations, please contact the instructor at the beginning of the semester to make arrangements for necessary classroom adjustments. Please note, you must first verify your eligibility for these through Student Disability Services (contact 330-672-3391) or visit www.kent.edu/sds for more information on registration procedures.

COURSE SCHEDULE: Exam dates will not change, but the schedule of topic coverage is tentative and may be revised depending upon how quickly or slowly we move through these topics.

August	M	28	Syllabus and course overview
	W	30	General definitions, methods, and issues – read pp. 2-8, 18-26, 46-54
September	F	1	General definitions, methods, and issues (cont.)
	M	4	<i>[no classes – Labor Day]</i>
	W	6	Speech recognition – read pp. 65-80, 82-86
	F	8	Speech recognition (cont.)
	M	11	Written word recognition – read pp. 88-96
	W	13	Written word recognition (cont.)
	F	15	Processing word meaning – read pp. 99-104, 116-122 (105-115 optional)
	M	18	Processing word meaning (cont.)
	W	20	Syntactic parsing – read pp. 126-135
	F	22	Syntactic parsing (cont.)
	M	25	topic TBA
	W	27	review for First Exam
	F	29	FIRST EXAM
	October	M	2
W		4	Propositions and textbase (cont.)
F		6	Propositions and textbase (cont.)
M		9	Inferences – revisit pp. 153-160, read 164-170
W		11	Inferences (cont.)
F		13	Inferences (cont.)
M		16	Discourse memory and understanding – pp. 144-150, 169-170, 179-182
W		18	Speech production – read pp. 187-199, 201-203
F		20	Speech production (cont.)
M		23	Speech production (cont.)
W		25	Written language production
F		27	review for Second Exam
M		30	SECOND EXAM
November		W	1
	F	3	Timecourse of oral language development (cont.) – read pp. 251-267
	M	6	Timecourse of oral language development (cont.) – read pp. 273-283
	W	8	Theories of oral language development – read pp. 311-326
	F	10	<i>[no classes – Veterans' Day]</i>
	M	13	Theories of oral language development (cont.) – read pp. 326-335
	W	15	Theories of oral language development (cont.)
	F	17	<i>[class cancelled – conference]</i>
	M	20	Reading acquisition – read pp. 295-297
	W	22	<i>[no classes – Thanksgiving]</i>
	F	24	<i>[no classes – Thanksgiving]</i>
	M	27	Second-language learning – read pp. 298-308, revisit pp. 314-317
	W	29	Acquired language disorders – read pp. 340-350
	December	F	1
M		4	review for Third Exam
W		6	THIRD EXAM
F		8	review for Final Exam
M		11	FINAL EXAM and make-up exam session 10:15 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.