

COM 370: Psychology of Language

Spring, 2011—MWF 8:00-8:50, Fell 180

School of Communication--Illinois State University--John R. Baldwin

Updated: -01/03/11

A brain is worth little without a tongue. – <i>French proverb</i>	
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Announcements	Email: jrbaldw@ilstu.edu
Readings	Writing Academese

Course Texts

- No texts—there will be packets of readings available at Rapid Print (Old Union basement)
- Additional readings may be on reserve in Milner Library (on-line).
- All students should have an active ULID e-mail account.

Course Goals and Approach

Many subjects in communication studies offer quickly applicable skills and ideas that can be transported easily to the workplace or to one's everyday life. But, you cannot use your shower, your bathroom, or your stereo system without there being an underlying foundation in your house or apartment. So also, the everyday communication of the classroom, the workplace, or the romantic encounter could not occur without the deep structures of information processing and the links between cognition and language.

This course is not a skills course, but is a theory and research course designed for you to understand better those deep structures. As a senior/graduate-level course, its objective is to introduce you to theory and research traditions in the area of language and communication, beginning from the processing of the brain and working outward to the nature of interaction within social contexts. Even though our content is fairly theoretical, what you learn should provide you with information that will help you to be a better producer and consumer of messages, either face-to-face or mediated.

The major topics include language as a system, the production and decoding of language, and the interactive nature between language and social and cultural systems. Specifically, you will learn what the human brain does with language (both reception and production), how children learn language, how language functions to create coherent conversations, how language shapes social and personal relationships, how language characterizes certain groups (e.g., sex/gender, ethnic, age), and how languages of various language families are different and similar.

After this course, you should be able:

- To outline the main components of language systems and describe how they relate to each other
- To describe the function of the brain as it relates to language perception and production
- To summarize how meaning is structured and coordinated in interaction
- To explain several theories pertinent to information processing, language, and psychology
- To conduct a basic discourse analysis of everyday interaction in terms of class theories/concepts
- To make practical applications of several class concepts to the everyday production and consumption of face-to-face and mediated messages
- To analyze the relationship between group belonging (e.g., culture, sex/gender) and language

Course Grade

You will earn your grade through the following assignments:

Assignment	Due Date	Possible	Earned
Participation		50	___/50
Artifacts*	Last Date:		___/50
• 1	2/2	10	___/10
• 2	2/14	10	___/10
• 3	3/4	10	___/10
• 4	3/18	10	___/10
• 5	4/16	10	___/10
*As a class, we will discuss inclusion/substitution of abstracts (journal article summaries)			
Exams:			300
❖ Exam 1:	2/18/11	100	___/100
❖ Exam 2:	3/25/11	100	___/100
❖ Final:[some elements comprehensive]	5/3/11 7:50	100	___/100
Research Paper:	4/22/11	100	___/100
TOTAL			500

Course Grade: 90% = A; 80% = B; 70% = C; 60% = D; under 60% = F

- *Graduate Students* will do a revised final project arranged with the instructor.

Description of Assignments

- ❖ **Participation (50 pts):** In a theory- and research-based course, participation is essential, as it both aids your understanding and allows the instructor to track your understanding of—or confusion with—the concepts covered. Being present everyday is important, but you must also participate, bring ideas to class, and reflect that you have processed relevant readings.
- ❖ **Artifacts (50 pts):** An *artifact* is an example of a class concept that occurs in everyday life. This semester, we will have five artifacts, which can be turned in at any time, *but no more than one in any given week*. Keep these to create a portfolio of the class in conjunction with your final project. We will share some ideas with class as they start coming in. You can look online at “psychology of language” syllabi for ideas, or I will post ideas on the Internet. I may do this in the form of a “language blog,” though you will want your artifacts to have fuller explanation than a blog. The artifact should be a 2-3 page DS summary that includes the following (not necessarily in this order):
 - Brief description, with relevant reference(s) of a concept covered in class
 - A description of the artifact (event, advertisement, conversation, website, etc.)
 - A clear application that connects the concept to the artifact (e.g. provide an example of how the artifact illustrates the concept).

While each artifact will receive its own grade for completeness and appropriateness of application, I reserve the right to alter final 50-point grade to reflect overall effort of artifacts, diversity of artifacts and class concepts covered, and so on. You will receive grading rubrics and examples.

- ❖ **Abstract (20 pts):** An *abstract* is a short summary of a journal article. These can range from a paragraph (like at the top of a journal article) to several pages. For our purposes, it will be a 2-page summary of a primary data article—that is, one that actually analyzes some aspect of language. *For*

2011, this is an optional assignment; it would replace any two of the artifacts. That is, if you choose to do the abstract, you only do 3 artifacts.

- ❖ **Research Paper (100 pts)**: The research paper is a conversation analysis paper in which you record, transcribe, and analyze an everyday conversation (not an interview, unless you want to study the interview process) between two people (any more than two people makes for very difficult-to-transcribe transcripts!). You should choose someone you know well, because your familiarity with the person (or people, if you are not one of the participants) will give you more options of what to talk about in your paper. To get a head start, begin thinking of the person or persons you want to tape record. Maybe carry a tape recorder with you in case a good conversation comes up. You will ultimately need a 3-5 minute section of tape, but will likely need a good 20-30 minute conversation to find the best text segment for analysis.

[Sample Transcript Analysis](#)

[Sample Paper](#)

- ❖ **Exams (300 pts)**: All exams are essay exams, and each will cover one third of the course. There is no comprehensive final exam, though the last exam will occur during the final testing period and may include *some* comprehensive concepts. A study guide will be posted on the website one week prior to each exam, and we will go over them in class the day prior to the exam.

Important Notes:

1. All assignments are due the *beginning* of class (it's late if I've already collected assignments in class). Instructor may penalize LATE work 10% for each class day late. If lateness is habitual for a given student, stiffer penalties may be imposed.
2. All assignments, including exams, should include only your ISUID, and not your name; this encourages a more fair "processing" on instructor's part, freer of "semantic webs of association" with your prior performance or other biases as I grade your assignments. ☺
3. Type and double-space all assignments, citing where necessary according to American Psychological Association (APA) style manual, **unless otherwise noted**. Margins should be 1 inch on all sides. No plastic covers or binders, please.
4. Only in extreme circumstances will you be permitted to make up exams or get deadline extensions on projects. You must discuss make-up opportunities with the instructor *in advance* of the missed class period or due date.
5. If you miss a test or presentation, it is your responsibility to make arrangements with the instructor.
6. Always keep careful records of your progress: attendance, and returned papers until you receive (and are in agreement with) final grade for course. This is especially true for group assignments. It is your responsibility to keep track of your academic progress. If at any time you would like to know your status formally, please visit me during office hours.
7. Any form of cheating, including plagiarized papers, will automatically result in a minimum penalty of "F" in the assignment. In some cases, a further sanction may be enforced.
8. The instructor reserves all rights to make changes to this syllabus. However, any changes regarding due dates of assignments or dates of tests will be carried out only by class consensus. In effect, the syllabus is our "contract." We usually stay close on target with syllabus. If there are updates to schedule, I will post notifications on [Announcements](#) page. *You are responsible* for keeping up with readings and due dates of assignments.
9. Demand and show respect! Some topics we discuss may be emotional for you. It is important to show respect for others and their opinions as well as expect the same for your own.

Special Needs: Any student in need of a special accommodation for a documented disability should contact Disability Concerns, 350 Fell Hall 438-5853 (voice), 438-8620 (TDD).

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Updated 01/06/10

NOTE: This is a *tentative* syllabus! I am always looking for new readings, so we may have a *limited number* of new readings. Rather than plot out day by day, we will approach topics a week at a time. I will make reading announcements in class and on an on-line announcements page.

Wk	
1 Jan 10-14	Introduction to course M: Intro to the Course UNIT 1: Language and the Brain W: What is the nature of language? Basic elements; roles in communication; Powerpoint F: Ellis, Ch. 1
2 Jan 17-21	M: No Class! Martin Luther King, Jr. Day W: Clark & Clark, Ch. 1; Click here for PowerPoint ; Notes on language production F: Do (non-human) Animals communicate? Thorpe, File 10
3 Jan 24-28	M: How does the brain work in communication? <i>Scientific American</i> ; Field W: How do we learn language? : A choice of three on-line journal articles F: What are some ways we can lose language? : Goodglass et al., Ch. 2...and a movie
4 Jan 31-Feb 4	UNIT 2: Language Comprehension and Production Week 4: What happens when we receive language? (Comprehension) : Construction and utilization of meaning; propositions & constituents; syntactic and semantic theories of processing M: Clark & Clark 2 W: Ellis 4: (Meaning) F: Communication theories of message reception (no readings)
5 Feb 7-11	Week 5: What happens when we produce language (production?) : Planning & execution; plans & goals; speech errors [planning theory] M: Plans: Clark & Clark 6 W: Execution: Clark & Clark 7 F: Communication theories of planning and message production (no readings)
6 Feb 14-18	Interlude: M: Guest speaker (ASL translator) W: exam prep F: Exam 1
7 Feb 21-25	UNIT 3: Language and Research: What are some ways to research conversation? M: Conversation analysis: Clayman & Gill [on-line readings available for more clarification] W: Discourse analysis: Blum-Kulka F: Application: Lakoff (Ch. 10) on apologies [Power point]. Abstracts??
8 Feb 28-Mar 4	UNIT 4: Conversation Conversational Structure: What is the structure of conversation? M: Handouts; Nofsinger Ch. 2: Turn-taking, repairing W: Conversational Interaction; PPT: Theories of Conversation: Coordinated Management of Meaning Conversational Coherence: What holds conversation together? F: Effectiveness, implicature, narratives, accounts (Thompson Ch. 6)
9 Mar 14-18	M: Global & Local coherence (Ellis Ch. 7) W: Face management (Cupach & Metts, Ch. 19); emotional language Power Point: www.ilstu.edu/~jrbaldw/370/Face.ppt UNIT 5: Social & Cultural Contexts How do friends and lovers communicate? Relational Contexts F: Relational comm: Idioms, metaphors, RIAs, Complaints, Teasing; Reading: Reynolds
10 Mar 21-25	M: W: Role relationships: Doctor-patient interaction (Choose 1; skim the other) W: Family comm: Reading TBA F: Exam 2
11 Mar 28-Apr 1	How do culture, "race," and gender influence our communication? M: Creative & constitutive power of language (linguistic relativity); dialects, cants, argot, pidgins; reading TBA

	<p>W: Discourse & Culture: Goddard, C., & Wierzbicka F: Russia and the United States: Carbaugh; ethnography of communication as research approach Conversation Analysis TRANSCRIPTS Due</p>
12 Apr 4-8	<p>Race & Ethnicity M: American dialects; BEV: Houston & Wood W: More on BEV: Goodwin; Communication Accommodation Theory Sex and Gender F: Sex and gender differences in language: Tannen; Zimmerman & West</p>
13 Apr 11-15	<p>M: Masculinity and communication: Coates; Competing explanations of gender/sex differences: Kramarae <u>How do languages vary around the world?</u> [Specific languages may change] W: Korean or Japanese F: Chinese</p>
14 Apr 18-22	<p>M: Xhosa or Navajo W: Bantu or Swahili F: Arabic Conversation Analysis Papers Due</p>
15 Apr 25-29	<p>How does communication enact/resist power and change society?: Meaning-making in larger society: <u>http://www.ilstu.edu/~jrbaldw/370/Power.ppt</u> M: Language & power: van Dijk (2003) W: Language & social action (Fairclough, 1992) F: Language & Media: Music time! (Reading TBA): Guest speaker</p>

Final (Exam 3): Thursday, May 3, 2011, 7:50 a.m.