



Brief Description & Learning Outcomes

The purpose of this course is to investigate the nature of the human mind, using language as a vehicle for this exploration. We will study (i) how knowledge is structured in the mind such that humans can produce and understand sentences in their native language(s), and (ii) how this knowledge develops as the product of innate knowledge in combination with information from the environment.

Goals of the course. Students will:

- show an understanding of the concept of a mental grammar.
- demonstrate the ability to analyze data and model parts of the system (e.g., phonology & syntax) that generates language for any language about which data is provided.
- gain an understanding of: the concept of innateness, questions about the interplay between innate knowledge and the environment (nature vs. nurture) in the acquisition of language, and the kinds of things that might be part of a human genetic endowment.
- gain an understanding of how a human mind uniquely acquires knowledge of language, given linguistic input that underdetermines the resulting system.
- apply the scientific method in the linguistic domain (e.g., testing the predictions of hypotheses using provided data sets).
- demonstrate understanding of the difference between the physical (objective) properties of language input and how we perceive and categorize that input.
- investigate how linguistic knowledge is used in real time during parsing, in an incremental, predictive, and statistical way.
- investigate the relation between language and thought.

Required Resources



Patterns in the Mind

Ray S. Jackendoff

1994 ISBN # 9780465054626

Available through UMD Bookstore: <https://ter.ps/bookstore>

All other readings will be made available on the ELMS course web site.

Course website (Canvas): elms.umd.edu

Campus Policies

It is our shared responsibility to know and abide by the University of Maryland’s policies that relate to all courses, which include topics like:

- Academic integrity
- Student and instructor conduct
- Accessibility and accommodations
- Attendance and excused absences
- Grades and appeals
- Copyright and intellectual property

Please visit www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html for the Office of Undergraduate Studies’ full list of campus-wide policies and follow up with me if you have questions. See below for more on specific policies.

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Class Meets
MWF 11:00–11:50am
Tawes (TWS) 1107

Office Hours
Mon 1:30-2:30 Dr. Bleam
Tue 2:00-3:00 Utku
Wed 2:30-3:30 Cassandra
Fri 9:30-10:30 Sarah
and by appointment

Prerequisites LING200
or equivalent

Course Communication
We will communicate time-sensitive info via ELMS announcements and/or email. To contact us (with questions, to make an appt, to discuss absences, etc.), please email us. You can generally expect to hear back within 24 hours (wkdays) or 48 hours (wkends).

Activities, Learning Assessments, & Expectations for Students

This class will be meeting in person at our scheduled class time. Class will be a mixture of lecture, discussion, and in-class exercises that you will do individually or in groups. My hope is that working through problems and discussing ideas interactively during class time will serve to create a community, increase your engagement in the class, and better help you gain skills and understanding than if you were just working through the material on your own. Please make every effort to attend class and be ready to interact with your classmates.

Preparation for class and time commitment: You are expected to actively prepare for every single class by reading and/or doing assigned exercises. You will need to learn material on your own and come to class ready to discuss and ask questions about what you aren't sure about. You should never come to class as a blank slate expecting the professor to teach you the material from scratch. Rather class will be supplemental to your outside work. As a rule of thumb, you should expect to spend 2-3 hours outside of class for every hour in class.

What you will do:

Homeworks and Exercises will be assigned to help you process ideas from the readings and to practice language analysis skills. These will be assigned and submitted through ELMS. **Homeworks** are generally assigned at the end of a unit; they are worth 10 points and are graded according to your ability to understand, apply, and synthesize ideas from the unit. There will be 4-5 homeworks over the course of the semester. **Exercises** are assigned more frequently and often are assigned as tools to help you learn and to focus your attention on aspects of the readings; they are worth 4 points and will be graded somewhat more leniently (i.e., it is possible to get some answers wrong and still get full credit as long as there is evidence of reasonable understanding and having read and applied concepts from the reading). **It is extremely important that you complete both the homeworks and the exercises on time and on your own in order to learn the material and be successful in the class.**

Late homeworks and exercises will receive a grade penalty of 1 point (10% for homework, 25% for exercises) if turned in within 48 hours after the due date (then 1 point deduction for every 24 hours after that). **Do not miss class to finish a homework!!** If the assignment is not turned in by the beginning of class, it is late anyway. Come to class, explain the situation to your TA or professor, and take an extra day to finish the homework (with the penalty). **Exceptions to the late policy will be made in the case of health issues and emergencies that are communicated to us in a timely manner. Send an email to your professor as soon as you possibly can to provide notification of an absence and to arrange to make up work.**

Exams & Quizzes: There will be two exams and several "quizzes" (learning check-ins). Exams will be taken in person in our classroom. The final exam is cumulative. To some degree you will be tested on memorized material, but exams will also require you to think about problems and analyze data that you have not seen before. The quizzes will be online; you will have a 48-hour window and two attempts (your grade will be your best attempt). If you cannot take a quiz or exam at the time scheduled due to a health issue or other emergency, make sure to contact me by email as soon as possible to arrange for a make-up. You must take the final exam in order to pass the class.

Participation: Your participation grade is for showing up and trying to learn. It will be based on being in class, being prepared (e.g., evidence you did the reading for that day), engagement in group problem-solving activities, coming to scheduled meetings with your instructors, and completing assigned learning activities.

Meetings with the instructor: you will have one short one-on-one meeting with one of the instructors during office hours before the midterm exam. This meeting will count toward your participation grade.

Experiment requirement: Students are required to fulfill an experimental requirement for this course which involves participating in linguistics experiments for a total of 2 hours OR doing a provided alternative activity (i.e., attending a scheduled video showing) for 2 hours, or some combination of these. Failure to complete this requirement will result in a lowering of your grade by 1/3 of a grade (i.e., A to A-, A- to B+, etc.). You will receive more information about this after the first 2 weeks of classes.

Extra credit: **There is no possibility for extra credit for this course.** Rather, your focus should be on learning the course material and putting effort into your assignments. If you are having trouble with anything at any point, be pro-active and make sure that you get help from one of us. Communicate about your situation. Don't let yourself get too far behind!

Student Responsibilities and Tips for Success

- **Be responsible for your own learning.** (Your focus should be on learning, not primarily on your grade. The requirements of the course are designed to help you learn. If you are doing the required work and learning the material, your grade will generally reflect that.)
- **Academic honesty and integrity:** properly cite ideas that come from other sources; do not share your work with others; do not ask to see someone else's homework. (ETC. See more on this below)
- **Attendance & Participation:** you are expected to be in class, prepared and participating (at least by paying attention), every scheduled class meeting. I invite you to engage deeply, ask questions, and talk about the course content with your classmates. Discussing ideas with your peers and professor will help you learn the material in a deeper way, and help you articulate your thoughts and develop critical thinking skills.
- **Keep up with homeworks** and exercises. Turn in on time and fully completed.
- **Communicate!** Let us know how your learning is going; request justified extensions & extra help in a timely manner. Let us know what's going on and we'll try to figure out how we can help!
- **Use ELMS-Canvas notification settings.** Pro tip! Canvas ELMS-Canvas can ensure you receive timely notifications in your email or via text. Be sure to enable announcements to be sent instantly.
- **Come to office hours** for extra help if there is anything that you do not fully understand. (Don't wait! Get help as soon as you notice an issue or problem to keep yourself from falling behind.)
- **Be respectful** to your instructors and classmates, and avoid disruptive behaviors (such as using devices, eating noisily, walking in and out during class). If you need to leave early or arrive late, please let me know ahead of time if at all possible.
- **Single stream rather than multi-tasking.** While in class and doing other class related activities, focus just on the class. You should not have social media or other unrelated sites and apps open at the same time.
- **Preparation for class and time commitment:** You should expect to have to actively prepare for every single class, spending 2-3 hours outside of class for every hour in class. Sometimes preparation will just be reading, other times it will be an exercise or homework assignment to turn in, or it may be reading plus an exercise. You will need to learn material on your own and come to class ready to discuss and ask questions about what you aren't sure about. You should never come to class as a blank slate expecting the professor to teach you the material from scratch. Rather class will be supplemental to your outside work.

Diversity, Names & Pronouns, & Self-identification

It is my intent that students from all backgrounds and perspectives be well served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit. Presented materials and activities are meant to be respectful of diversity (including gender, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, religion, and culture). Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Please let me know (in person, electronically, or via anonymous feedback) ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students or groups.

I invite you, if you wish, to tell us how you want to be referred to both in terms of your name and your pronouns (he/him, she/her, they/them, etc.). Keep in mind that the pronouns someone indicates are not necessarily indicative of their gender identity. Visit trans.umd.edu to learn more.

Additionally, how you identify in terms of your gender, race, class, sexuality, religion, and dis/ability, among all aspects of your identity, is your choice whether to disclose (e.g., should it come up in classroom conversation about our experiences and perspectives) and should be self-identified, not presumed or imposed. I will do my best to address and refer to all students accordingly, and I ask you to do the same for your fellow colleagues.

Grades

Your grade is determined by your performance on the learning assessments in the course and is assigned individually (not curved).

All assessment scores will be posted on the course ELMS page. If you would like to review any of your grades (including the exams), or have questions about how something was scored, please email us to schedule a time to meet.

We are happy to discuss any of your grades with you, and if we have made a mistake we will immediately correct it. Any formal grade disputes must be submitted in writing and within one week of receiving the grade.

Learning Assessments	Category Weight
Homeworks (4-5)	20%
Exercises	15%
Participation	10%
Quizzes/Learning check-ins (3-4)	10%
Exam 1 (Midterm)	20%
Exam 2 (Final)	25%
Total:	100%

Final letter grades are assigned based on the percentage of total assessment points earned. I follow standard rounding practices (so 89.5 rounds to 90). To be fair to everyone I have to establish clear standards and apply them consistently. Please understand that being close to a cutoff is not the same this as making the cut (89.49 \neq 90.00). It would be unethical to make exceptions for some and not others. Please do not ask me to do this.

Final Grade Cutoffs				
+ 98%	+ 87%	+ 77%	+ 67%	
A 93%	B 83%	C 73%	D 63%	F <60%
- 90%	- 80%	- 70%	- 60%	

University & Course-Specific Policies

1. **Students with Disabilities:** If you have any kind of disability or need accommodations, I will make every effort to accommodate your needs. It is your responsibility to bring this to my attention at the beginning of the course (well before any exams or assignments are due). If you require special accommodations for test-taking, you need to arrange for this at least one week before a scheduled quiz or exam, and then also remind me by email a day or two before the quiz or exam.

2. **Academic Integrity:** We follow the University's policies on academic honesty and will report any form of cheating or dishonesty according to these policies. Please review the terms and penalties of the Student Honor Council's Code of Academic Integrity at: <https://www.president.umd.edu/sites/president.umd.edu/files/documents/policies/III-100A.pdf>

You must write up and complete all work by yourself and in your own words and cite any outside sources that you used. If you are having trouble with class material please seek help from one of your instructors well before exams or assignment deadlines. *Any idea or information that is not cited is assumed to be your(-singular) original contribution; otherwise it is plagiarism.* Plagiarized material (copied, whether word-for-word or not, from a book, the internet or a fellow student) will not be accepted for credit. **If we discover two assignments that have portions of identical material, we will assign a grade of "0" to BOTH assignments and the case will be referred to**

the Honor Council. Do not, under any circumstances, give your completed (or partially completed) assignment to someone else in the class (whether the intention is for that person to turn in your assignment or to help the student understand the assignment, or whatever).

For this course, some of your assignments will be collected via Turnitin on our course ELMS page. I have chosen to use this tool because it can help you improve your scholarly writing and help me verify the integrity of student work. For information about Turnitin, how it works, and the feedback reports you may have access to, visit [Turnitin Originality Checker for Students](#)

3. Attendance, Absences, & Make-ups

- Make every effort to come to class: course attendance is linked to learning and academic success.
- If you need to miss class for whatever reasons, inform your instructor by email as soon as possible.
- If you miss class, collect documentation to support your absence – see details in the policy (and below).
- If you miss class due to an excused absence, email/meet with your instructor to discuss the appropriate academic accommodation.
- Do not provide false information to your course instructor; providing false information to University officials is prohibited under Part 9(h) of the Code of Student Conduct (V-1.00(B) University of Maryland Code of Student Conduct) and may result in disciplinary action.

For excused absences: If a student is absent on a day when a test or quiz is scheduled or when an assignment is due, they are required to notify the instructor as soon as possible (ahead of time if possible) by email (tbleam@umd.edu), and, upon returning to class, to bring documentation of the emergency or situation (not a self-signed note). The student is responsible for scheduling make-up work as soon as it is possible to do so by contacting the professor via email. Failure to make arrangements with the professor in a timely manner may result in an inability to make up the work (homework, exam, etc.).

For religious observances or participation in other pre-scheduled activities (university, military, doctor's appointments), the student must notify the instructor by email in advance of the absence and make arrangements to make up any missed work.

4. Emergencies/Inclement weather: Official closures and delays are announced on the campus website at www.umd.edu and snow phone line (301-405-SNOW), as well as on local radio and TV stations. If the professor is forced to cancel class due to inclement weather conditions or for any other reason, registered students will be notified by email through the ELMS web site (and an announcement will be posted on ELMS).

5. This syllabus may be subject to change. Students will be notified in advance of important changes that could affect grading, assignments, etc.

University policy about mask-wearing: for the current status go to: <https://umd.edu/4Maryland>

Copyright Notice

Course materials are copyrighted and may not be reproduced for anything other than personal use without written permission. **If recordings of the class are made for student accommodations, these recordings (in part or whole) may not be shared outside of the class.**

Get Some Help!

You are expected to take personal responsibility for your own learning. This includes acknowledging when your performance does not match your goals and doing something about it. Sharpen your communication skills (and improve your grade) by visiting <https://ter.ps/writinghelp> and schedule an appointment with the campus Writing Center. Finally, if you just need someone to talk to, visit <http://www.counseling.umd.edu>.



Course Schedule

- This is a tentative schedule, and subject to change as necessary. You will need to monitor the course ELMS page for current deadlines. Homework dates are approximate. **Exercises will be frequent** and are not marked in the schedule. You should expect to have something to read and/or turn in for each class.
- **Readings** are listed **on the first day they are relevant**. (In the absence of any over-riding information given on ELMS or in class, please have the reading done by class on the day it is listed.)
J = Jackendoff; LF = Language Files. Access to all readings except for Jackendoff will be provided on ELMS.
- More details about readings and assignments will be given in class and regularly updated on the web page.
- In the event of a prolonged university closing, or an extended absence from the university, adjustments to the course schedule, deadlines, and assignments will be made based on the duration of the closing and the specific dates missed.

Date	Topic	Due Dates Readings (&HW)
M 8/28	Intro to class, Admin, The Enterprise	Background: LF Ch.1
W 8/30	Mental Grammar/I-language & Methodology (review of Grammaticality, Description/Prescription; scientific method)	J Preface; Chs.1-2; 4 Isac & Reiss: I-language Pinker
F 9/1	Innateness/Nativism/UG/Human Language Faculty	Lidz, J Ch.3, Adger
M 9/4	Labor Day – NO CLASS	
W 9/6	Review of Phonetics	(J Ch.5); LF ch.2
F 9/8	Phonetics & Phonology	Quiz 1 (Phonetics)
M 9/11	Review of Phonology	J Ch.5; LF ch.3; HW1 due
W 9/13	Phonology	Quiz 2 (Phonology)
F 9/15	Phonology: syllable struct & perceptual illusions	Dupoux et al
M 9/18	Phonology: Categorical Perception	Eimas
W 9/20	Acquisition of Phonology (phoneme categories)	Werker
F 9/22	Acquisition of Phonology (production)	O’Grady ch.11, pp.361-369;
M 9/25**	Acquisition of Phonology	HW2 due
W 9/27	Review of Syntax (constituents & phrase structure)	J Ch.6; LF ch.5
F 9/29	Syntax (Ambiguity & Recursion)	
M 10/2	Syntax (Phrase Structure in other languages)	Quiz 3 (Syntax)
W 10/4	Syntax: Dependencies (subj-verb agreement, complementation/argument structure); context sensitivity	
F 10/6	Syntax (Transformations)	
M 10/9	Long Distance dependencies/X-ling transformations	
W 10/11	(Universal) Constraints on transformations	J Ch.6 (Ch.8); HW3 due
F 10/13	Computational Modeling – Probabilities vs. Grammaticality	
M 10/16	Practice/Review/Make-up Day	
W 10/18	Midterm Exam	
F 10/20	Psycholinguistics: Parsing	TBA/Frazier
M 10/23	Psycholinguistics: Active Gap Filling	Phillips & Wagers

W 10/25	Psycholinguistics: Active Gap Filling	Omaki et al
F 10/27	UG/Nativism vs. Empiricism (Statistical learning)	Lidz, Gagliardi, TBA
M 10/30	UG/Nativism: UG as limits on language & acquisition	Adger
W 11/1	Acquisition (Word learning; Rules Morph/Syntax)	J Ch.8, O'Grady Ch.11, Acq Video
F 11/3	Acquisition (Syntactic bootstrapping)	
M 11/5	Acquisition (Acquisition of Islands)	HW4 due
W 11/8	Poverty of the Stimulus; linguistic universals & acquisition	J Ch.9; Ch.10
F 11/10	Poverty of the Stimulus; linguistic universals & acquisition	TBA
M 11/13	ASL: mental grammar & UG	J Ch.7, O'Grady Ch.10
W 11/15	Acquisition of ASL: mental grammar & UG (Guest Lecture by Dr. Deborah Chen Pichler from Gallaudet University)	Pichler
F 11/17	Critical Period	Curtiss; Newport; Genie video
M 11/20	Critical Period; Homesign/Creoles	
11/22-24	Thanksgiving Break: NO CLASS	
M 11/27	Nicaraguan Sign	Osborne; Kegl; Senghas
W 12/29	Nicaraguan Sign	Senghas & Coppola
F 12/1	Other primates & Human Language	Terrace et al
M 12/4	Other primates & Human Language	HW5 due
W 12/6	Language & Thought (number cognition)	Gordon; Gelman & Gallistel
F 12/8	Language & Thought (number cognition)	
M 12/11	Wrap-up/Overview/Review	
F 12/15	FINAL EXAM (Friday, Dec.15 8:00am-10:00am)	