

Psychology of Language
PSYC 3500 · Fall 2023

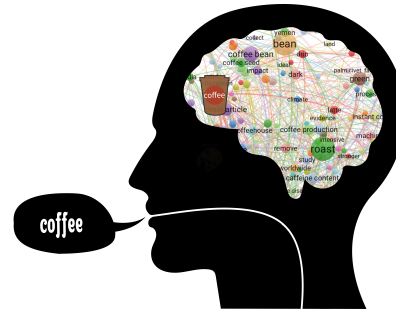
Time Tues & Thurs 5:00–6:15pm

Room Bousfield (BOUS) 106A

Instructor Emma Wing (she/her)

Email emma.wing@uconn.edu

Drop-in hours TBD in person
& by appointment via Zoom
Email me with your availability!



1 Overview

Language is a human faculty that we take for granted, like breathing. Nobody taught us to breathe, just as no one taught us to listen, understand, and make sense of the jumble of sounds that we're confronted with from the moment we're born. Yet, somehow we learn to make sense of the sounds we hear; we hear patterns in those sounds and we associate meanings with those patterns. As adults, we possess knowledge about tens of thousands of words, what they mean, how they're spelled, how they sound, how to move the muscles in the lips and tongue to pronounce them, how to join them up to form sentences. In this course we will discuss ways in which psycholinguists study language in the mind and brain.

2 Learning objectives

By the end of this course, you will be able to...

- Name the language subsystems and describe 1+ thing about their development
- Describe a kind of experiment used to study language and its strengths & limitations
- Name 2+ differences & similarities between language comprehension and production
- Explain the relevance of the distinction between competence and performance
- Describe how 1+ kind of computational model of language works
- Name a language disorder, how it is acquired, and what it disrupts
- Use experimental evidence to think critically about theoretical debates in the field

Quick Links

Course modality	Attendance and make-up policy
Texts and readings	Student responsibilities and resources
Grading	Course schedule
Extra credit	

3 Modality

We will meet synchronously and in person during our scheduled class times. All course content, lecture materials, assignments, and quizzes will be posted on HuskyCT. Exams and weekly quizzes will be administered online.

4 Texts and readings

Required text:

Altmann, Gerry (1997). *The Ascent of Babel*. [Oxford University Press].

- Purchase used for as low as \$6 on Amazon.
- Other required readings will be made available on HuskyCT.

Optional background texts:

Fernández, Eva, and Helen Smith Cairns (2011). *Fundamentals of Psycholinguistics*. [John Wiley & Sons].

Sedivy, Julie (2014). *Language in Mind: An Introduction to Psycholinguistics*. [Sunderland, MA: Sinauer Associates.]

5 Grading

When grading is not straightforward (e.g., for written homework assignments), rubrics will be posted alongside the assignment prompt. If anything is unclear, please don't hesitate to ask me about it!

Grading breakdown		
Exams (3)	20pts each	60%
Homework assignments (3)	10pts each	30%
Quizzes (8/13)	1pt each	8%
Experiment Participation	2 pts total	2%

Exams

Your exam grade is based on your performance on your best 3/4 exams, all administered on HuskyCT. If you take all four exams, your lowest grade will be dropped.

Quizzes

One quiz will be administered per week for a total of 13 quizzes. Completing 8/13 quizzes is required for full points on quizzes. Taking the first quiz is required of all students.

Homework Assignments

There will be three (3) written homework assignments throughout the semester, no longer than a single-spaced page each. Each will ask you to think critically about a topic we discuss

or reference during class. They will be made available on HuskyCT with a rubric for each one. As long as you follow the rubric and don't plagiarize, you will do well on these.

Experiment participation

Experiment participation counts for 6 “credits”, which is roughly 3 hours of participation. If you would prefer not to participate, you can complete a short paper summary as an alternative assignment.

- There will be many online and in-person experiments to participate in, but if you are unable to find them, you can always do the alternative assignment.
- A rubric for the alternative assignment will be administered toward the end of the semester.
- The summary will be due during reading week.

6 Attendance and make-up policy

Attendance

Please be respectful of the learning environment and others in it by engaging fully with course activities when attending. For example, you may use technology to aid your learning by using a tablet to take notes, but please refrain from using a device for non-class-related activities during class time. Please silence all devices to avoid disrupting other learners' experiences.

Exams

Instead of a make-up exam, there will be 4 exams offered, and your lowest exam grade will be dropped. The first three exams will include information on each of units 1, 2, and 3. The final bonus exam is cumulative. Exam 3 and the bonus exam will both be available during finals week. Each exam has a time limit of 70 minutes.

Homework Assignments

There are three total homework assignments. You can submit one of these assignments late with a 10% deduction until the final day of class; any other late assignments will not be accepted. You may also resubmit one assignment for a better grade until the last day of class, but the 10% deduction will apply. That means you can redo an assignment for up to 90% of the total points, and if you got above a 90%, you cannot receive any more points for redoing it.

Any assignment can be resubmitted except an assignment that received a 0 for cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism includes (but isn't limited to) having ChatGPT (or equivalent) write your assignment for you or lifting text directly from ChatGPT. Using tools like ChatGPT as an aid is fine, however. But be aware that information AI provides is often incorrect. Always check the information elsewhere, and cite your sources!

Quizzes

Completing 8 quizzes is necessary to receive full points for quizzes. The first quiz is required. Quizzes must be done by the due date, and there are no make-ups for quizzes. However,

there are 13 total chances to complete quizzes. The 5 additional quizzes can be taken for up to 5 extra credit points added to your final grade at the end of the course. Please note that final course grades cannot exceed 100% (100 total points).

7 Student responsibilities and resources

Academic Misconduct

There will be absolutely no tolerance for plagiarism or cheating. If you are found to be in violation of the University of Connecticut's Student Code for plagiarism, cheating, or using ChatGPT or similar to write an assignment (please reference the Student Code link below), you will receive a failing grade for that assignment or exam. You could also be suspended from the university. Please always cite the source of the information you use, and if you have any questions about the referencing of material, please refer to the student conduct code or speak with me. [Link to Conduct Code](#)

Accommodations

If you have conditions that require accommodations, please contact the Center for Students with Disabilities and we will work together to meet your needs.

If you have approved CSD accommodations but I haven't emailed you to confirm within the first two weeks of class, please contact the CSD and request that they forward me your accommodation information. Please don't hesitate to talk to me about your specific needs regarding your accommodations if you feel comfortable doing so.

Resources for Students Experiencing Distress

I believe firmly that your, and my, mental health is of paramount importance. These have been particularly challenging times, and stress can manifest in different individuals in quite different ways. If you are unsure how to deal with any mental health issues (whether depression, anxiety, inability to sleep or focus, or any of the myriad ways in which you may be affected), please reach out to me for advice on available services that can help. The following University statement includes information on student health services:

The University of Connecticut is committed to supporting students in their mental health, their psychological and social well-being, and their connection to their academic experience and overall wellness. The university believes that academic, personal, and professional development can flourish only when each member of our community is assured equitable access to mental health services. The university aims to make access to mental health attainable while fostering a community reflecting equity and diversity and understands that good mental health may lead to personal and professional growth, greater self-awareness, increased social engagement, enhanced academic success, and campus and community involvement.

Students who feel they may benefit from speaking with a mental health professional can find support and resources through the Student Health and Wellness-Mental Health (SHaW-MH) office. Through SHaW-MH, students can make an appointment with a mental health professional and engage in confidential conversations or seek recommendations or referrals

for any mental health or psychological concern. We have had much positive feedback from past students about the positive impact visiting SHaW-MH had on their sense of wellbeing and empowerment.

Mental health services are included as part of the university's student health insurance plan and also partially funded through university fees. If you do not have UConn's student health insurance plan, most major insurance plans are also accepted. Students can visit the Student Health and Wellness-Mental Health located in Storrs on the main campus in the Arjona Building, 4th Floor, or (recommended) contact the office at (860) 486-4705, or <https://studenthealth.uconn.edu/> for services or questions.

Statement on Copyright

Lectures, notes, handouts, and displays are protected by state common law and federal copyright law. They are my own original expression. Students are authorized to take notes in class; however, this authorization extends only to making one set of notes for your own personal use and no other use.

Course schedule

	Week	Tuesday	Topic	Thursday	Topic	Assignments
UNIT 1: DEVELOPMENT OF LANGUAGE	1	Aug 29	What is language?	Aug 31	Phonemes & speech perception	Citations quiz
	2	Sep 5	Syllables & prosody	Sep 7	Syllables & prosody (cont.)	HW1 posted
	3	Sep 12	Learning words	Sep 14	Learning syntax (grammar)	
	4	Sep 19	Critical period & language creation	Sep 21	Midterm 1	HW1 due Sep 22
UNIT 2: THE MATURE SYSTEM	5	Sep 26	Lexical access & context effects	Sep 28	Semantic memory	
	6	Oct 3	Sentence processing	Oct 5	Discourse processing	
	7	Oct 10	Computational models I	Oct 12	Computational models II	HW2 posted
	8	Oct 17	Dialogue	Oct 19	Pragmatics	
	9	Oct 24	Production	Oct 26	Big picture discussion	HW2 due
UNIT 3: LANGUAGE, BRAIN, & DIVERSITY	10	Oct 31	Midterm 2	Nov 2	Language & mind (Radiolab)	Radiolab
	11	Nov 7	Language & brain	Nov 9	Aphasia	
	12	Nov 14	Reading	Nov 16	Acquired dyslexia	HW3 posted
	13	Nov 21	<i>Break</i>	Nov 23	<i>Break</i>	<i>Thanksgiving</i>
	14	Nov 28	Diversity & multilingualism	Nov 30	Language, culture, & thought	HW3 due
	15	Dec 5	Big picture discussion	Dec 7	Final review (optional)	

Midterm 3 & Cumulative bonus exam: Anytime Monday 9am–Friday 11:59pm during finals week

Quizzes are administered online through HuskyCT every week except for weeks 13 and 15.

This syllabus is subject to change. An announcement will be sent out if it does, and the most recent copy will always be on HuskyCT.