HU2910-R01 Language and Mind
Syllabus, Fall 2008

Contact Information
Professor: Victoria Bergval
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Course website: https://courses.mtu.edu/webctllo~on/378859272001

Course Description
Every mentally competent member of our species shares an ability of amazing flexibility and complexity: language, which many describe as the quintessential human skill. On the one hand, language seems very simple: it develops so naturally and quickly that even 3-year-old children can use it well. On the other hand, as we will see upon closer inspection, this evident simplicity masks extreme complexity. Despite decades of serious work, computers capable of true, wide-ranging conversation are still just science fiction, and it is a matter of considerable debate whether other species of animals have anything that can really be called language.

A deep understanding of how language works requires and leads to understanding of our cognitive processes: language is a window on the mind, telling us a great deal about what it means to be a human and a thinker. During this term, we will closely examine language in its various parts and components, study how the brain is used in language comprehension and production (and what happens when things go wrong), and consider how language and mind interrelate. We will examine how humans acquire language, how these processes compare to animal and computational communication systems, and discover how much we may not even know we know about our language ability.

Required Text(s)
- Additional articles may be placed on reserve (electronic or library).

Course Prerequisites
- UN1001 Perspectives on Inquiry (may be taken concurrently)

Course Objectives
- To attempt to understand the complex human language capability, so that we may use it better.
- To study the workings of the brain and mind in the process of learning and using language.
- To acquire a working knowledge of the vocabulary and principles of the science of language, so we may discuss language more precisely.
- To dispel common myths about language, to become better "linguistic consumers."
- To identify the similarities and differences between the communication systems used by humans and animals.

Course Requirements
- Participation
  - Attendance/Active engagement 100 points
  - Problem sets, short papers, quizzes 100 points
- Exam #1 (10/1) 250 points
- Exam #2 (11/5) 250 points
Option (either Exam #3 OR Research Project) 300 points
- Exam #3 (Part A: 12/5; Part B-essay: 12/10)
  OR
- Research Project: Paper & Presentation (300 points total)
  - Conference w/ VB (Wk. 7 or 8) 10 points
  - Initial Prospectus (due 10/27) 10 points
  - Revised Prospectus & Bibli. (11/17) 30 points
  - Presentation (12/8 or 12/10) 100 points
  - Paper due (12/12) 150 points

TOTAL 1000 points
Grading System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Grade points/credit</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93% &amp; above</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AB</td>
<td>88% - 92%</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>Very good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>82% - 86%</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC</td>
<td>76% - 81%</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>Above average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>70% - 75%</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD</td>
<td>65% - 69%</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>Below average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60% - 64%</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>Inferior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>59% and below</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>Failure</td>
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I: Incomplete; given only when a student is unable to complete a segment of the course because of circumstances beyond the student’s control. A grade of incomplete may be given only when approved in writing by the DEAN.

X: Conditional, with no grade points per credit; given only when the student is at fault in failing to complete a minor segment of a course, but in the judgment of the instructor does not need to repeat the course. It must be made up within the next semester in residence or the grade becomes a failure (F). A (X) grade is computed into the grade point average as a (F) grade.

Details of Course Requirements & Policies

Attendance Policy

Regular attendance, preparation, and participation are required to keep up with the pace of ideas and information exchange in this class. I will frequently explain examples or topics not covered in the book or put on reserve or e-mail. It is also your responsibility to read the material before class and to come prepared to discuss it, and to arrange for someone to pick up any handouts or lend you notes if you miss class.

You learn linguistics by doing it; thus, active engagement in class participation is very important. If you miss class, you deprive yourself of important practice and information, as well as depriving the class of your viewpoint and ideas. You get up to two absences without penalty, but each unexcused class absence after the first two

subtracts 1 point from the attendance grade. Missing more than five class periods zeroes out 10% of your grade. Be sure to notify me in writing of any legitimately excusable absences—advance, if possible.

Preparation for class

Come to class with the assignment read! This will enable you to join in the discussion and to ask informed questions. Generally, on Mondays, there are problem sets or other assignments due, but at any point, when I feel that students aren’t keeping up with the reading, I may give a short pop quiz. Much of the material in the book is quite detailed linguistically. My lectures and notes will give guidance on where to focus, but are not the sole basis of what we will cover.

Problem sets

The assignments are designed to help you practice linguistic problem solving or to get you thinking about issues in the study of language. You may work together to solve problem sets, but do not simply copy others’ answers. These questions represent the kinds of questions you will be asked on exams, and the problem sets provide critical practice.

Turn the problem sets or papers in at the start of class on the due date. We will discuss the answers that day (so be sure to keep a copy for yourself). Late problem sets will receive NO credit, but it is important for you to practice doing the problems in any case. All assignments will be graded credit/no credit; credit will be given for completed assignments, and those where there is a clear attempt to solve every problem. Missing, copied, or incomplete assignments that suggest lack of effort will receive no credit. Please do these carefully, and raise any difficulties during the class discussion. In class, I will ask different students to present solutions to the questions. Your readiness and ability to answer during this time will be counted as part of your participation grade. If you are not present or are unprepared, this will count against you.
Examinations
The three examinations generally cover the material of that section of class, but the material in some instances builds on previous work, so some questions may be comprehensive (e.g., the essays, especially for Exam #3, Part B). The exams often build on the exercises covered in the problem sets, which employ the kinds of analysis that linguists use to address problems and issues in language. The exams will have some short answer, multiple choice, and/or matching questions as well as essays. Again, it is critical to read the texts. I cannot cover all material in the class, and I will assume that you will be familiar with the general issues and approaches of the texts.

NOTE: Students may opt to do a paper rather than the 3rd exam.

Research Paper & Presentation
Students have the option of doing a paper rather than Exam #3. You will meet with me to select a topic for research and presentation to the rest of the class. These presentations (5-7 min.) may be done in small groups. Sample topics include:

- A presentation on some topic of linguistic interest in the news via public media, as it relates to the topics of the class (focus on Language and Mind issues, rather than Language in Society; check with me for suitable topics).
- Participation in a debate about whether animals have language, or whether computers will be able to talk like humans.
- An analysis of a set of cartoons, discussing their linguistic significance and relation to class material.
- Research on another topic of mutual interest and application to the subjects of the class.

Paper/presentation option, order of events
Students will:

a) meet with Prof. Bergvall to discuss possible topics (Wk 7 or 8)
b) write a short prospectus (1-2 pp.) outlining the topic and possible sources (due 10/27).
c) conduct research on some topic relevant to the course,
d) use and appropriately document sources (4-10, the majority being peer-evaluated citations); submit a revised prospectus with an annotated bibliography citing all sources used (due 11/17).
e) submit a 5-7-page paper, with graphics and appropriate citations; this will be in a portfolio that includes a previous draft, prospectus, etc. (Due Wk 14, 12/12.)
f) make a class presentation using visual aids (Wk 14).

Keep copies of all stages of work to submit with your final portfolio, from research notes to final form, in order to substantiate that this is your own research. If you work in a group, you need to keep a separate copy for your own portfolio, and to write me a memo detailing your contribution to the whole project. I will give more details on this process and the project later in the semester.

Other Important Course Policies

Academic Integrity
Linguists often do their best work in consultation with others; in fact, we must observe how people talk in order to gather our data. But data are not solutions. Taking the work of others and passing it off as your own is academic theft and will be punishable by failing the assignment/course or dismissal from school. Cases of plagiarism will be turned over to the Dean of Students’ Office. See details about Michigan Tech’s Academic Integrity definitions, policies, and enforcement procedures at http://www.sa.mtu.edu/dean/judicial/airc/ and
You may consult with others as you work on take-home problem sets, but you will hurt yourself if you simply copy others' answers. **All exams must be done on your own.**

You may also consult with others on your research papers, but you must document all sources used, and you must write up the final form of the paper yourself (or clearly document your contributions to a group project).

We will discuss the proper practice of research and citation during the term. See me or visit the Writing Center [http://www.hu.mtu.edu/wc/] if you have any questions about appropriate research processes or writing concerns.

### Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Programs

Michigan Tech strives to offer equal opportunity to all of its employees, students, applicants for employment, and applicants for admission without regard to race, religion, color, national origin, age, gender, sexual orientation, height, weight, marital status, disabled veteran status, veteran status, arrest record, or disability. See [http://www.admin.mtu.edu/admin/boc/policy/ch3/ch3p7.htm](http://www.admin.mtu.edu/admin/boc/policy/ch3/ch3p7.htm).

The Affirmative Programs Office (commonly called the Affirmative Action Office, or AAO) facilitates Michigan Tech's development of an environment that is free from prejudicial discrimination or harassment and that is conducive to learning and individual growth for all campus members and visitors. Contact the Affirmative Programs Office, Room 207, Administration Building, Phone: 906-487-3310, Fax: 906-487-2842; E-mail Sherry Kauppi, Director, for more information.

### Accommodation for Disabilities

MTU complies with all federal and state laws and regulations regarding discrimination, including the **Americans with Disability Act of 1990 (ADA).** If you have a disability and need a reasonable accommodation for equal access to education or services at MTU, please see the Dean of Students (x7-2212) as soon as possible. See the student handbook regarding **Disability Services:** [http://www.admin.mtu.edu/urel/studenthandbook/student_services.html#disability](http://www.admin.mtu.edu/urel/studenthandbook/student_services.html#disability)

For other concerns about discrimination, you may contact your advisor, department head, or the Affirmative Action Office (x7-3310).

### Electronics in the classroom

I appreciate your full attention in class: you need to be present (not just physically, but also mentally), prepared, and ready to participate in class. Thus, **ELECTRONIC DEVICES** such as laptops, cell phones, Blackberries, iPods, PDAs, etc. **MUST BE TURNED OFF** in the classroom (unless there is a compelling need and arrangements are made in advance with the professor).

If you are expecting an important phone call and need to keep your cell phone on, let me know in advance. The phone should be set on **vibrate**; take the call outside the classroom.

Any information exchanges on these devices during exams are also prohibited and violate the Academic Integrity Code of Michigan Tech.

### Schedule of Course Assignments

The following schedule presents my best estimate of the progress through the class; it may be subject to change to meet class needs.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wk</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Chap. 1: What is Language? (pp. 3-34)</td>
<td>9/1 No class: Labor Day</td>
<td>9/3 Introduction, Goals, Lg, Mind, Brain, &amp; Knowledge</td>
<td>9/5 No class: K-Day [prepare your linguistic autobiography, Due 9/8]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>(Chap. 1, cont.) Hauser, Chomsky, &amp; Fitch (pdf-opt.)</td>
<td>9/8 De-/pre-scription &amp; Universal Grammar</td>
<td>9/10 Design features Symbols, Icons</td>
<td>9/12 What you don’t know you know about lg: PS#1 due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Chap. 2: Brain &amp; Lg (pp. 35-67)</td>
<td>9/15 Modularity, brain structures, aphasia</td>
<td>9/17 Language &amp; thought Critical periods</td>
<td>9/19 Secret of a Wild Child The sad case of Genie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Chap. 3: Morphology (pp. 71-114 &amp; Chap. 11: 472-8)</td>
<td>9/22 Discuss PS#2 Minimal units of meaning, words, affixes</td>
<td>9/24 Identifying morphemes “Free the bound morphemes!”</td>
<td>9/26 New words How language changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Chap. 4: Syntax (pp. 115-72)</td>
<td>10/6 Phrase structure rules, hierarchy in language</td>
<td>10/8 Syntax; complex rules, long-distance ref’nships</td>
<td>10/10 Colorless Green Ideas Syntactic structures</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Chap. 4: Syntax (cont.)</td>
<td>10/13 Discuss PS#4 CONFNS W/ VB on paper ideas Wks 7-8</td>
<td>10/15 &lt;What else is there to do in linguistics?&gt; Midterm evaluations</td>
<td>10/17 How does meaning happen? Word meaning</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Chap. 5: Semantics (pp. 173-219)</td>
<td>10/20 Sentence meaning; Pragmatics</td>
<td>10/22 IPA, Consonants</td>
<td>10/24 Vowels, transcription Discuss PS#5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Chap. 6: Phonetics (pp. 221-54)</td>
<td>10/27 Transcription; writing</td>
<td>10/29 Discuss PS#6 Sound classes, allophones</td>
<td>10/31 Sound rules, minimal pairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Chap. 7: Phonology (pp. 255-299)</td>
<td>11/3 Discuss PS#7 REVIEW Chaps 4-7</td>
<td>11/5 EXAM #2</td>
<td>11/7 1st language acquisition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Chap. 8: Language Acq. (pp. 313-62)</td>
<td>11/10 2nd language acquisition</td>
<td>11/12 Playing the Language Game: lg acquisition</td>
<td>11/14 Bees, birds, Clever Hans, whales, dolphins</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Chap. 8: Language Acq. (pp. 313-62)</td>
<td>11/17 Primte communication REVISED PROSP. &amp; BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE</td>
<td>11/19 Can Chimps Talk? Consider the bonobo Kanzi</td>
<td>11/21 Linguistics: Do the media get it right?</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Animals (Review Chap. 1 &amp; 384-390)</td>
<td>Thanksgiving Break</td>
<td>11/24 No class</td>
<td>11/28</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Chap. 9: Language Proc. (pp. 363-406)</td>
<td>12/1 Human &amp; Computer processing of language</td>
<td>12/3 Computational Lx &amp; AI REVIEW Chaps 1, 8, 9</td>
<td>12/5 EXAM #3, PART A (in class)</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Chap. 10: Lg &amp; Society (pp. 409-437+)</td>
<td>12/8 STUDENT TALKS OR Dialects</td>
<td>12/10 STUDENT TALKS Evals; Exam 3B due</td>
<td>12/12 SUMMARY Implications RESEARCH PAPERS DUE</td>
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