Course details

LING80D Language and Mind

University of California, Santa Cruz - Dept. of Linguistics - Spring 2016

Meetings

Mon+Wed: 5:00-6:45pm, Merrill 102

Teaching Staff

- instructor: Matt Wagers <mwagers@ucsc.edu>, 231 STEV
- teaching assistants: Jeff Adler <jmadler@ucsc.edu>, Karl DeVries <kadevrie@ucsc.edu>

Office Hours

- Tuesdays, 2-4pm, Wagers, 231 STEV
- Wednesdays, 2:30-3:30pm, Adler, 265 STEV
- Thursday, 12-1pm, DeVries, 238 STEV

Course goals

GOALS

The goal of this course is to develop an understanding of the relationship between language and the mind. We will examine the design features of human language and situate them in the context of other mental capacities in our species as well as communicative capacities in other species. We will ask how languages are acquired by children; whether grammatical structure influences how we think; and how the mechanisms of language are realized in the brain.

EVALUATION

- Three exams (15% - 20% - 25%)
- Seven weekly assignments (40%)
  - Completed via eCommons

Course resources

Course resources

- Web site: eCommons
- Required textbook:
  

- The most current edition was released in 2010 in paperback (ISBN 978-1451612998). It's available via (i) the BayTree bookstore; (ii) online booksellers like AbeBooks, Alibris or Powell's; (iii) and, of course, Amazon (physical form or e-book). You should expect to pay less than $20.
- It's OK to get a hard-cover edition (2006; ISBN 978-0743237567), which you may be able to find used for cheaper. Keep in mind, the page numbers might not quite match up with the paperback edition but the content is not substantially different.
- I will post a PDF version of the week 1 readings so you'll have a chance to get your copy, but I expect each course member to have regular access to a copy to complete their readings according to the syllabus deadlines.
- A copy has been placed on 2-hr reserve at McHenry (call number: P118 .Y359 2006).
Course policies

**Policies**

You are expected to take responsibility for your own learning. So here are the usual reminders for optimizing your performance in the class.

- **Attend class.** You are responsible for material in your readings as well as those presented in lecture. Keep in mind that readings will sometimes be primary sources, and it is during class that unfamiliar concepts will be explained and discussed.
- **Participate.** Ask questions and offer ideas in class.
- **Communicate.** Never hesitate to get in touch. If you get into difficulty, it is entirely appropriate to seek help. Come by office hours, or send an email. Likewise, if you are having a problem that adversely affects your classroom participation, contact the instructor.
- **Academic Honesty.** As always, the work you complete for this course must be your own work and must meet basic standards of honesty. Be sure and familiarize yourself with University policies and procedures related to Academic Integrity: https://www.ue.ucsc.edu/academic_integrity. If we suspect academic dishonesty, we will comply with these procedures very strictly.

**DRC Accommodations.** If you qualify for classroom accommodations because of a disability, please get an Accommodation Authorization from the Disability Resource Center (DRC) and submit it to me in person outside of class (e.g., office hours) within the first two weeks of the quarter. Contact DRC at 459-2089 (voice), 459-4806 (TTY), or http://drc.ucsc.edu for more information on the requirements and or the process.

**Part 1: Language and Biology**

(Mon Mar 28, 2016 05:00 PM - Wed Apr 20, 2016 06:45 PM)

**Week 1**

- Mar 28
  - **Introduction.** 8 Claims about Language.
  - Reading: none.

   - Mar 30
     - **What can the birth of new languages reveal about the mind?**
     - Reading:
       - Yang, Ch. 1

       - Distributed: Weekly Assignment 1 (WA1) on eCommons

**Week 2**

- Apr 4
  - **Language and Intelligence. Patterns of preservation and deficit.**
  - Due: WA1

- Apr 6
  - **Animal communication. How does human language fit in?**
  - Reading:

       - Distributed: Weekly Assignment 2 (WA2) on eCommons

**Week 3**

- Apr 11
  - **The cognitive revolution and language design (Chomsky v. Skinner).**
  - Reading:

https://ecommons.ucsc.edu/portal/tool/b76399c4-cf1d-4429-a1b0-678c6f2e742f/printFriendly
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- Yang, Ch. 2
  - Due: WA2
- Apr 13
  - Language Design, cont’d.
  - Reading:
    - Yang, Ch. 6, pt 1 (pp. 93-102)
    - Distributed: Weekly Assignment 3 (WA3) on eCommons

Week 4

- Apr 18
  - Language and Biology. Spill-over, reinforcement and review.
    - Due: WA3
- Apr 20
  - EXAM #1

Part 2: Language Acquisition

Weeks 5

- April 25 Learning the sounds of language
  - Yang Ch. 3 (“Silent Rehearsals”)
  - Weekly Assignment 4 (WA4) distributed
- April 27 Learning sounds, cont’d
- April 29 WA4 due

Week 6

- May 2 Where (and what!) are the words?
  - Yang Ch. 4 (“Wuckoo”) + Ch. 5 (“Word Factory”)
  - Weekly Assignment 5 (WA5) distributed
- May 4 Learning word meanings
- May 6 WA5 Due

Week 7

- May 9 Wrap-up word learning (morphology; re-read Yang Ch 5) and Lg Acquisition
- May 11 Exam 2 (Language Acquisition)

Part 3: Language and Thought (and Brain)

Week 8

- May 16 How does language affect thought? Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis then and now
    - These can both be accessed via Google Scholar when you’re on-campus (or using the library’s off-campus access tool. I will upload PDFs early this week for your convenience).
• Weekly Assignment 6 (WA6) distributed

  • May 18  CLASS CANCELED

Week 9

  • May 23  WA6 due, WA-EC assigned
  • May 23  Space, Time, Language and Thought.
      (These are both freely accessible on the web).
  • May 25  Language and the brain: classic discoveries and new questions
  • May 27  WA-EC due

Week 10

  • May 30  MEMORIAL DAY
    o WA7 Assigned
  • Jun 1  Brain spill-over; course wrap-up
  • Jun 3  WA7 Due AND Exam Distributed

Exam Week

Jun 8  Final Exam (cumulative but largely focused on Weeks 8-10) is a take-home exam

  • Distributed on eCommons ‘Tests and Quizzes’ on June 3.
  • Submitted via eCommons no later than June 8 at 10:30pm [which is the end time of the scheduled exam period for our class]