Psych/Ling 378   **Psychology of Language**   Spring 2014
Macalester College   R. Brooke Lea

Office: 329 Olin/Rice
Office Phone: 696-6196
e-mail: lea@macalester.edu

Class meets on Wednesday Evenings 7:00 - 10:00

Course Overview and Objectives:

Psychologists, linguists, and scholars from other academic disciplines study language and behavior in different ways. Clearly, there is no one "right" way to think about this topic. Instead, researchers use a variety of approaches and methods to understand language and behavior. In this course, we will take a cognitive-experimental approach to the psychology of language. That means that we will favor theories that can be tested scientifically, and that we will be reading and talking about controlled laboratory experiments as much as we will be reading about and discussing theories.

This course has three primary objectives: 1) to expose you to a range of theory and research in language comprehension that includes work from a variety disciplines; 2) to provide a forum in which you and your peers will discuss the readings in a relaxed yet analytical and rigorous fashion that will lead to a mastery of current theories and research methods; and 3) to give you the opportunity to use your knowledge of the relevant literature and experimental methodology to design an original study that will be realized in the form of a research proposal. You will make a poster presentation of an article central to your proposal midway through the semester, and you will present your full proposal at the end of the semester.

This syllabus is preliminary. Readings and assignments are subject to change.

Course Requirements	Points	Due
Attendance & Participation	10	every class
2 Class Presentations (at least)	20	TBD/day of class
18 (approx.) "Critical Reader" Summaries	15	TBD/day before class
Leading class discussion twice (at least)	20	TBD/day of class
Poster Presentation of Article Relevant to Final Project	10	midterm
Poster Presentation of Proposed Research	10	last class
Final Research Proposal	15	end of term

Grading
Grades will be assigned based on the percentage of available points:

92-100 %	90-91%	88-89%	82-87%	80-81%	78-79%
A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+

72-77%	70-71%	68-79%	62-67%	60-61%	<60%
C	C-	D+	D	D-	NC

Attendance and Participation

10 pts   Attend all classes

        Initiate contributions multiple times during each class period

        Contributions are relevant and insightful

        Listen attentively when others present

5 pts   No more than one excused absence

        Initiate contributions once during each class period

        Contributions are usually, but not always, relevant and insightful

        Listen attentively when others present

0 pts   More than one unexcused absence

        Initiate contributions infrequently

        Contributions are not relevant or informative

        Not consistently attentive

Classroom Roles

The Presenter's job is to provide a cogent presentation of a reading. The presentation should be understandable to an interested, general audience that has not read the article. Presentations should be formalized as either a "Powerpoint" presentation or a structured handout.

Key points for presentations:

- Introduce theoretical motivation, research questions/predictions, and prior results.
- Describe method and design: **give examples of stimuli**, describe assumptions.
- Describe results: explain why and how results relate to research question, make sure to "unpack" the results for a general audience (e.g., if key results are in tabular form, consider converting to a graph).
- Describe the authors' conclusions, alternative interpretations, and the paper's contributions.

The Discussion Leaders' job is to engage the class in thoughtful discussion of the research presented. There will be two discussion leaders for each reading. Each discussion leader will read a paper carefully and will submit a brief synopsis together with a set of discussion question of the paper on Moodle the day before class.

Key points for synopses:

- Describe the major contributions of the paper.
- Summarize the design (i.e., what were the dependent and independent variables?, how were independent variables operationalized?, how were dependent variables measured?)
- Describe the researchers' assumptions (e.g., "reaction time reflects accessibility") and predictions
- Pose one question about lit review, methods, or results section.
- Describe how the results relate to previous research that we have covered.

Key points for discussion questions:

- Avoid closed (e.g., yes/no) questions
- Remember that the discussants have not read the paper; but they have just seen a great presentation.
- The goal is to get classmates to engage as deeply as possible with the material.
- Avoid the temptation to focus too much discussion on opinion. (e.g., Weak: "What do you

think of Grice's proposal?" Stronger: "Which parts of Grice's proposal fit conversational behavior, and which seem problematic, and why?"
- Avoid the temptation to answer your own discussion questions. It's the discussant's job to respond to your prompts.

The Discussant's role is to serve as an interested consumer of the research being presented and discussed. The primary job of discussant is to a) listen carefully during the presentation; b) ask for clarifications during presentations; and c) discuss the research after the presentation. Another job of the discussant is to evaluate presentations.

Final Project and Poster Presentations
The final project is to propose a novel experiment, in the form of a grant proposal, which will help to answer a question related to language behavior. This is an opportunity to study a topic that is of particular interest to you. This is also an opportunity to develop and refine your research/design skills and to practice scientific communication. An important consequence of this project being a grant proposal is that the research must be interesting and important to people other than yourself. Specifically, the research you propose should have the potential to advance current research and be useful to other scholars. Therefore, as you identify and develop your research ideas we will be mindful of how "the reviewers" might react to various elements of your proposal. "The reviewers" refers to grant reviewers at large government agencies like the NSF and the NIH who must decide which research projects will likely be the most valuable to the scientific community. Only a fraction of grant proposals are funded. The evaluation of your final paper will in part be determined by how fundable the proposed research is. I will serve as your research colleague throughout the semester until you turn in your paper. Then I become a grant reviewer. Along the way, you will need to complete the following:

- Description of Interest Area & List of 3 Key Papers   2/19
- Preliminary Research Question / Paper for Poster Presentation   3/5
- Poster Presentation of a Published Article Relevant to Final Project   3/12
- Draft of Methods   4/2
- Draft of Introduction (literature review)   4/9
- Draft of Results / Discussion   4/16
- Poster Presentation of Proposed Research   4/23
- Final Research Proposal   5/9

Outline of the Topic Schedule (subject to change), and Deadlines:

1/29: **Introduction to the course and some background to language research**

2/5: **Background to language research**

2/12: **The Importance of Cooperation in Discourse**

2/19: **Discourse as a Collaborative Process/The role of Common Ground in Discourse**
Description of Interest Area & List of 3 Key Papers

2/26: **Inferences During Reading**

3/5: **Video Night:** "Genie: The Wild Child"; "Acquiring the Human Language"
Preliminary Research Question / Paper for Poster Presentation

3/12: **Poster Presentations**
Research Topic approved

Spring Break!

3/26: **Language Acquisition**

4/2: **Bilingualism**
1st draft of Method section due

4/9: **Metaphor and Sarcasm**
1st draft of Introduction (literature review)

4/16: **Learning from Texts/Individual Differences in Reading**
1st draft of Results / Discussion sections due

4/23: **Mixed Topics**
1st full draft of paper including abstract, title page, tables & figures, and reference section due

4/30: **Poster Party**

Final paper Due Friday, May 9

Tentative Reading List:

Background Reading

Whitney, P. (1998). *The psychology of language.* New York: Houghton Mifflin Company. Chapters 1, 2, 3, & 8.

The Importance of Cooperation in Discourse

Grice, P. (1975). *Studies in the way of words.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Chapter 2, "Logic and conversation".

Hilton, D.J. (1995). The social context of reasoning: Conversational inference and rational judgment. *Psychological Bulletin. 118,* 248-271.

Holtgraves, T. (2005). Diverging interpretations associated with the perspectives of the speaker and recipient in conversations. *Journal of Memory and Language, 53,* 551-566.

Discourse as a Collaborative Process / The Role of Common Ground in Discourse

Clark, H.H., & Wilkes-Gibbs, D. (1986). Referring as a collaborative process. *Cognition, 22,* 1-39.

Greene, S.B., Gerrig, R.J., McKoon, G., & Ratcliff, R.(1994). Unheralded pronouns and management by common ground. *Journal of Memory and Language, 33,* 511-526.

Lea, R.B., Mason, R.A., Albrecht, J.E., Birch, S.L., & Myers, J.L. (1998). Who knows what about whom: What role does common ground play in accessing distant information? *Journal of Memory and Language, 39,* 70-84.

Horton, W.S., & Keysar, B. (1996). When do speakers take into account common ground? *Cognition, 59,* 91-117

Keysar, B., Barr, D.J., Balin, J.A, & Paek, T.S.. (1998). Definite reference and mutual knowledge: A processing model of common ground in comprehension. *Journal of Memory and Language, 39,* 1-20.

Inferences During Reading: The Minimalist Hypothesis and Reactions to it.

McKoon, G. & Ratcliff, R. (1992). Inference during reading. *Psychological Review, 99*, 440-466.

Graesser, A.C., Singer, M., & Trabasso, T. (1994). Constructing inferences during narrative text comprehension. *Psychological Review, 101,* 371-395.

Albrecht, J.E. & O'Brien, E. (1993). Updating a mental model: Maintaining both local and global coherence. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory and Cognition, 19*, 1061-1070.

Albrecht, J.E. & Myers, J.L. (1995). Role of context in accessing distant information during reading. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory and Cognition, 21*, 1459-1468.

O'Brien, E. J., Rizzella, M. L., Albrecht, J. E., & Halleran, J. G. (1998).Updating a situation model: A memory-based text processing view. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition,24,* 1200–1210.

Zwaan, R. A., & Madden, C. J. (2004). Updating situation models. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition, 30,* 283–288.

O'Brien, E. J., Cook, A. E., & Peracchi, K.A. (2004).Updating a situation model: Reply to Zwaan and Madden (2004). *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition,24,* 1200–1210.

Ferreira, F., Bailey, K.G.D., & Ferraro, V. (2002). Good-enough representations in language comprehension. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 11,* 11-15.

Kintsch, W. (1988). The role of knowledge in discourse comprehension: A construction-integration model. *Psychological Review, 95,* 163-182.

Singer, M., & Lea, R.B. (2012) Inference and Reasoning in Discourse Comprehension. In Hans-Joerg Schmid and Dirk Geeraerts (Eds.), Handbook of cognitive pragmatics. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Language Acquisition

Akhtar, N., Carpenter, M., & Tomasello, M. (1996) The role of discourse novelty in early word learning. *Child Development, 67,* 635-645.

Samuelson, L.K., & Smith L.B. (1998). Memory and attention make smart word learning: An alternative account to Akhtar, Carpenter, and Tomasello. *Child Development, 69,* 94-104.

Jusczyk, P.W. (1997). Finding and remembering words: Some beginnings by English-learning infants. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 6,* 170-174.

Mandel, D.R., Jusczyk, P.W., & Pisoni, D.B. (1995). Infants' recognition of the sound patterns of their own names. *Psychological Science, 6,* 314-317.

Krumhansl, C.L.; Jusczyk, P.W. (1990). Infants' perception of phrase structure in music. *Psychological Science, 1,* 70-73.

Bilingualism

Johnson, J. S., & Newport, E. L. (1989). Critical period effects in second language learning: The influence of maturational state on the acquisition of English as a second language. *Cognitive Psychology, 21,* 60-99.

Van Heuven, W. J. B., Dijkstra, T., & Grainger, J. (1998). Orthographic neighborhood effects in bilingual word recognition. *Journal of Memory and Language, 39,* 458-483.

Perani, D., Paulesu, E., Galles, N.S., Dupoux, E., Dahaene, S., Bettinardi, V., Cappa, S.F., Fazio, F., & Mehler, J. (1998). The bilingual brain: Proficiency and age of acquisition of the second language. *Brain, 121,* 1841-1852.

Marian, V., & Neisser, U. (2000). Langauge-dependent recall of autobigraphical memories. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General, 129*, 361-368.

Bialystok, E., & Shilpi, M. (1998). The relationship between bilingualism and the development of cognitive processes in problem solving. *Applied Psycholinguistics, 19,* 69-85.

Nicoladis, E., Mayberry, R.I., & Genesee, F. (1999). Gesture and early bilingual development. *Developmental Psychology, 35,* 514-526.

Metaphor and Sarcasm

Glucksberg, G., Gildea, P.M., & Bookin, H. (1982). On understanding nonliteral speech: Can people ignore metaphors? *Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behavior, 21,* 85-98.

Gibbs, R.W. (1986). On the psycholinguistics of sarcasm. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General, 115,* 1-13.

McDonald, S., & Pearce, S. (1996). Clinical insights into pragmatic theory: Frontal lobe deficits and sarcasm. *Brain and Language, 53,* 81-104.

Pearce, S., McDonald, S., & Coltheart, M. (1998). Interpreting ambiguous advertisements: The effect of frontal lobe damage. *Brain and Cognition, 38,* 150-164.

Jones, L.L, & Estes, Z. (2005). Metaphor comprehension as attributive categorization. *Journal of Memory and Language, 53,* 110-124.

Learning from Texts and Individual Differences in Reading

Kintsch, W. (1994). Text comprehension, memory, and learning. *American Psychologist, 49,* 294-303.

Long, D.L., Johns, C.L., & Morris, P.E. (2006). Comprehension ability in mature readers. In M.J. Traxler and M.A. Gernsbacher (Eds), *Handbook of psycholinguistics.* New York, NY: Academic Press.

Long, D.L., Oppy, B.J., Seely, M.R. (1997). Individual differences in readers' sentence- and text-level representations. *Journal of Memory and Language, 36,* 129-145.

Gernsbacher, M.A. (1993). Less skilled readers have less efficient suppression mechanisms. *Psychological Science, 4,* 294-298.

Gernsbacher, M.A., & Robertson, R W. (1995). Reading skill and suppression revisited. *Psychological Science, 6,* 165-169.

Mixed Topics of Interest

Gerrig, R.J. (1989). Suspense in the absence of uncertainty. *Journal of Memory and Language, 28,* 633-648.

Rapp, D.N. & Gerrig, R.I. (2006). Predilections for narrative outcomes: The impact of story contexts and reader preferences. *Journal of Memory and Language, 54,* 54-67.

Barton, S.B. & Sanford, A.J. (1993). A case study of anomaly detection: Shallow semantic processing and cohesion establishment. *Memory & Cognition, 21,* 477-487.

Krauss, R. M. (1998). Why do we gesture when we speak? *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 7,* 54 - 60.

Nygaard, L.C. & Lunders, E.R. (2002). Resolution of lexical ambiguity by emotional tone of voice. *Memory & Cognition*, 30, 583-593.

Foertsch, J. & Gernsbacher, M. (1997). In search of gender neutrality: Is singular *they* a cognitively efficient substitute for generic *he*? *Psychological Science, 8,* 106 - 111.

Oakhill, J., Garnham, A., & Reynolds, D. (2006). Immediate activation of stereotypical gender information. *Memory & Cognition, 33,* 972-983.