

PSY 378 Psychology of Language

Instructor: Ali J. Fulsher

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Winter/Spring 2026

When: Tues & Thurs 3-4:30pm

Where: Theater 203

Course Overview

The course is divided into three sections: (1) *Origins and Properties of Language*, (2) *Language Comprehension and Production Processes*, and (3) *How Language Interacts with Cognition and Culture*. The first section examines linguistic and philosophical debates. The second section emphasizes cognitive theories and research. The third section blends cognitive psychology, social psychology, and anthropological research, highlighting the implications of language in our own lives.

There is no textbook; all readings will be provided on Moodle.

Course Objectives

- Analyze and critically evaluate fundamental issues, arguments, and points of view in linguistics and psycholinguistics
- Ask empirical questions and identify appropriate methods for answering them
- Convey your thoughts and perspectives clearly through visual, oral, and written forms of communication

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Ali J. Fulsher (she/her)
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Your Instructor

Hello! Please feel free to use my first name (Ali, pronounced like “alley”) in class and email. If you prefer to be more formal, Professor or Professor Fulsher are also fine.

Though I am listed as “instructor,” a more apt term may be “facilitator” or “director.”

Learning is an active, collaborative process. My role in the classroom is not to distribute knowledge; rather, it is to create the conditions in which we can think and grow together. ***I am so excited to work with you all!***

Communicating with Me

Outside of class, I am available during dedicated **student hours** on a first come, first-served basis.

- **Tuesdays & Thursdays 2 - 3pm**
- **OLRI 325 or Zoom (email me for a link)**

You can also **schedule appointments** with me. Check my Google calendar and email me a few times (9am - 6pm) that work with both of our schedules. I will select a time and confirm it with you.

And, of course, **please email me any questions/concerns you have as they arise!** If you need an extension, email me. If you are sick and can't make it to class, email me. **I am always happy to hear from you,** and I will respond as promptly as I can (within 24 hours). I check email regularly 9am - 6pm, Monday - Friday.



Accessibility Commitment

I am committed to creating an accessible and inclusive class where every student can participate fully in course activities and benefit from course materials. **I would be happy to talk to you about how you learn best and how I can help maximize your experience in this class.** Please don't hesitate to be in touch with your requests and suggestions.

What I will do for all students:

- Post assignments & readings at least two weeks before they are due
- Share slides and other materials used in class lectures
- Meet with you individually during office hours or by appointment
- Facilitate your connection to the MAX Center or other sources of support on campus
- Submit an Early Academic Warning and/or contact the Dean of Students if your performance or attendance slips
- Be as flexible as possible in the event of a crisis or emergency (provided that you have also spoken to someone in the Dean of Students office)

What you can do if your needs are not met by the above

If you know you have a disability that affects your learning process, I encourage you to meet with the [Disability Services](#). This will allow you to receive accommodations. Disability Services will send me a confidential letter detailing your accommodation request. We can meet after that to discuss how to ensure that your needs are met.

If you are not registered with Disability Services

If you wait to self-advocate until you are in trouble in this course, you may be out of luck. I cannot accommodate you retroactively. Without a letter from Disability Services, I cannot offer a flexible schedule of assignment deadlines or a more flexible attendance policy.

Preparation & Participation (60%)

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|-----------------------------------|---|--------|
| Discussion Lead | Work in groups of 2-3 to plan a lesson for 1 day of class and lead the lecture + discussion. | 5 pts |
| Reading Activities | Four times throughout the semester, a writing activity will accompany an assigned reading. These will be due at noon on the day of class the reading is due and will often be the basis of in-class activities. More information will be posted on Moodle. | 20 pts |
| Reflections | Five times throughout the semester, I will ask you to reflect on the readings and class discussions. These will be due at noon on Sundays. More information will be posted on Moodle | 25 pts |
| Overall Attendance & Contribution | Attendance means showing up on time, readings completed, and contributing positively to class discussions/activities (see attendance & participation policy, page 5) | 10 pts |

Final Project - Research Proposal (40%)

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| Initial Ideas | Share a list of 2-3 topics/ideas you are interested in | 2 pts |
| Reference List | Decide on your topic and create an APA style reference list of at least 5 peer-reviewed articles | 3 pts |
| Paper Outline | Write an outline of your research proposal, covering lit review, methods, and discussion. | 5 pts |
| Rough Draft | Have a rough draft of your final paper ready for peer-review day | 10 pts |
| Poster | Create and present a research poster version of your final paper | 10 pts |
| Final Paper | Submit a logical, coherent, and well-written academic paper proposing an original research project. A detailed rubric will be posted on Moodle. | 10 pts |

Attendance & Participation Policy

Your presence – physical *and* mental – is an essential component for success in this course. **We all bring a unique set of knowledge, skills, and experiences to the classroom, and we all play a role in fostering an atmosphere of empathy, respect, and vulnerability.** Excessive absences and disengagement weaken our learning community.

Of course, we are human and life happens. **You can miss up to 2 classes without penalty. After the 3rd unexcused absence, you will begin to lose participation points.** The same goes for classes you attend but never contribute to. Positive contributions range from active listening and collaborative note-taking, to sharing new ideas and posing thoughtful questions during discussions, to offering emotional support and mutual aid to one another.

Technology Etiquette

Laptops and tablets are allowed as long as they are used as learning aids (e.g., for note-taking). **“Multitasking” (e.g., checking email or social media during class) can impede your learning,** and is distracting to those around you (including me!).

Cell phones should be set to silent before class and kept in your pocket or backpack. If you must use your phone during class time, please step outside to do so.

I reserve the right to ban technology that becomes detrimental to our classroom culture.



Academic Integrity

[Macalester's webpage on academic integrity](#) provides useful definitions and examples of plagiarism and academic dishonesty.

In this class, examples of integrity violations include directly quoting from a text without using quotation marks or providing the in-text citation (with page numbers!), closely paraphrasing a text without an in-text citation, copying a classmate's work, using GenAI when not permitted, and when permitted, using GenAI without proper acknowledgement.

If I suspect that a violation has occurred, intentionally or not, I will contact you and have a discussion. Afterwards, I will decide what is the most appropriate next step, which may include a 0 on the assignment and/or a referral to the Director of Academic Programs. **No one enjoys this, so let's avoid it, please!**

Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) Use Policy

GenAI tools like ChatGPT and Gemini are powerful large language models (LLMs), designed to generate human-like text based on given prompts or questions. **For some in-class activities, you will be allowed and even encouraged to use these tools.** In these instances, I will provide explicit instructions on how and why they can augment your learning.

For most writing assignments, however, GenAI-use will NOT be not be allowed.* Writing is not just a product – it is a *process*. Writing clarifies our thinking and solidifies our knowledge. Also, I am interested in *your* thoughts! – not the statistically-probably thoughts of a machine. Using GenAI in these cases robs you *and* me of valuable learning experiences, and constitutes a violation of academic integrity.

**If English is not your first language, and you use ChatGPT or similar tools to improve your prose, please email me. We can meet to discuss the option of responsible GenAI-use in this course.*