

Psychology of Language Section 01

PSYC 237

Fall 2024 3 Unit(s) 08/21/2024 to 12/09/2024 Modified 08/23/2024

Contact Information

Instructor:	Dr. Christina Tzeng
Office Location:	Virtual for Fall 2024
Email:	christina.tzeng@sjsu.edu
Office Hours:	Via Zoom on Fridays 1:30 PM – 3:30 PM PST, or by appointment
Class Days/Time:	Tuesdays & Thursdays, 2:00 PM – 3:15 PM PST
Classroom:	Dudley Moorhead Hall (DMH), Room 359
Prerequisite(s):	PSYC 135 Cognition, PSYC 155 Perception, LING 101 Introduction to Linguistics, or LING 161 Psycholinguistics

Course Description and Requisites

Selected topics in the cognitive mechanisms underlying spoken language processing. Topics include the perception, production, acquisition, and evolution of language.

Prerequisite(s): PSYC 135, PSYC 155, LING 101, or LING 161 (or equivalent).

Letter Graded

Classroom Protocols

Course Description

One of the biggest mysteries of human cognition is our ability to understand and use language. We use language with seemingly little effort, yet we have only to look at machines, or try to learn a new language in adulthood, to see evidence of what an incredible feat this is. This seminar course draws from theoretical and empirical literature in psychology, neuroscience, linguistics, and anthropology to examine fundamental questions about the psychology of language. These include: How did language evolve? How does human language differ from other systems of communication? How do we acquire language? How is language represented in the brain? How do we map words to meaning? How do language disorders inform the cognitive processes underlying language processing?

Course Format

This is an **in-person course** with weekly in-person meetings on **Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:00 PM – 3:15 PM PST**.

As this is a graduate **seminar** course, our class sessions will be heavily discussion- based. Prior to attending class each week, students will engage in course content which may include reading assigned readings, viewing demonstrations that illustrate relevant course concepts, and writing response papers.

Canvas

All course content, such as the syllabus, readings, assignments, grades etc. will be on the Canvas Learning Management System [course website](http://sjsu.instructure.com) at <http://sjsu.instructure.com>. You are responsible for regularly checking Canvas for course announcements and updates.

Program Information

Program learning outcomes (PLOs) are skills and knowledge that students will have achieved upon completion of the MA in Research and Experimental Psychology degree. Each course in our curriculum contributes to one or more of these PLOs. The PLOs for the degree are:

1. Advanced Knowledge Base in Research and Experimental Psychology. Students completing the Research and Experimental Psychology MA program will be able to demonstrate advanced knowledge of the major theoretical perspectives and research methods across areas of experimental psychology (e.g., Developmental, Social, Cognitive, and Physiological).
2. Research Skills and Scholarship. Graduates of our program will possess an advanced level of competence in research methods, statistical techniques, and technical writing skills. Students completing the Research and Experimental Psychology MA program are required to complete a thesis. The thesis will demonstrate:
 - 2.1 creative problem-solving in the design and implementation of empirical research.
 - 2.2 project management skills in the implementation of empirical research.
 - 2.3 advanced competency in the statistical analysis and interpretation of empirical research findings.
 - 2.4 communication (oral and written) of research findings at a professional level.
3. Career Enhancement. Students completing the Research and Experimental Psychology MA program will achieve career enhancement through placement in a doctoral program or acceptance of a position

requiring a master's in psychology in the public or private sector.

Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

Upon successful completion of this course, students will achieve the following CLOs:

Master Course Content:

- **CL01:** Demonstrate knowledge of the different components of language, including its evolution, perception, production, acquisition, and the cognitive mechanisms that underlie these phenomena

Demonstrate Critical Thinking:

- **CL02:** Infer appropriate conclusions from theoretical and empirical research on the psychology of language
- **CL03:** Evaluate and criticize arguments pertaining to issues in psychology of language research
- **CL04:** Present and discuss findings and implications from psychology of language research
- **CL05:** Apply knowledge of course concepts to understand the role of spoken language in everyday interactions

Embrace Scientific Values:

- **CL06:** Respect the relative nature of empirical evidence
- **CL07:** Recognize the value of intellectual curiosity and skepticism

Course Materials

Required Materials

Assigned readings will include theoretical and empirical journal articles or book chapters that will be made available on our Canvas course site. There is no required textbook for this course.

Library Liaison: Christa Bailey (christa.bailey@sjsu.edu)

Course Requirements and Assignments

Students must complete assigned readings and activities **before** the start of each class session. Readings will include textbook readings and peer-reviewed theoretical and empirical articles. You may also be required to view short lectures, listen to podcasts, or watch demonstrations of relevant course concepts.

Critical Commentaries

You will prepare critical commentaries prior to every class session. The goals of these critical commentaries are to (1) encourage you to critically evaluate the assigned readings, (2) to help you organize your thoughts in preparation for class discussion, and (3) to provide me with a means of gauging your comprehension of specific topics. Commentaries should be 200 - 300 words each.

Critical commentaries are **due by noon every Tuesday and Thursday**. Further details about these commentaries will be shared in class.

Discussion Facilitations

Two or three students together will facilitate a class discussion centered on the assigned readings. Facilitators are required to (1) prepare brief presentations summarizing the take-home messages of the papers, (2) pose critical thinking questions, and (3) fuel and mediate class discussion.

The objectives of this exercise are to provide you with the opportunity to (1) practice engaging in productive discussions grounded in theoretical and empirical literature, (2) practice synthesizing key points in scientific literature, and (3) practice conveying those to a scholarly audience.

Facilitators are required to meet with me virtually prior to their assigned discussion date to share their plans for this assignment. Students do not need to submit critical commentaries for the class sessions that they are facilitating discussion.

Final Project

The final project consists of two components: (1) an interview and (2) a synthesis paper. Students will interview an individual who is a native speaker of a language other than English. Students will ask questions regarding the interviewee's experience learning and using the language(s) they speak.

Students will then be asked to write a 3 – 4-page synthesis paper that interprets the interviewee's experience through the lens of concepts learned in this course. The objective of this assignment is to provide students with an opportunity to apply course concepts to everyday interactions and appreciate the diversity and richness of linguistic experiences.

Participation in In-Class Discussions

Seminar sessions are heavily discussion-based and thus require full participation from everyone in the class. Participation will be evaluated on the extent to which contributions fulfill the CLOs mentioned above.

A note on attending class sessions:

Attending class sessions is strongly encouraged. Quite frankly, a seminar course necessitates regular attendance to yield fruitful discussion.

Class attendance has also been found to be a better predictor of college grades than any other known predictor of academic performance, including high school GPA and standardized test scores (Credé, Roch & Kieszczynka, 2010). Data gathered from SJSU students suggests that attending class sessions:

- (1) helps students feel more accountable for their studies
- (2) helps them stay on track with course material
- (3) makes students feel more engaged with the class and with the instructor
- (4) allows them the opportunity to ask questions and receive an immediate response

All of these are factors that led to a more positive overall class experience.

If you cannot attend class, please email me with **as much advance notice as possible**.

References:

Credé, M., Roch, S. G., & Kieszczynka, U. M. (2010). Class attendance in college: A meta-analytic review of the relationship of class attendance with grades and student characteristics. *Review of Educational Research, 80*(2), 272-295.

✓ Grading Information

Weighting of Grades:

Assignment/Activity	CLO Assessed	Percent of Final Grade
Critical Commentaries	1, 2, 3, 6	35%
Participation in Class Discussions	5, 6, 7	25%
Discussion Facilitation	3, 4, 5	20%
Final Project	1, 2, 3, 4	20%

Final Letter Grade Scale:

A plus: 97.00 to 100.00%	A: 93.00 to 96.99%	A minus: 90.00 to 92.99%
B plus: 87.00 to 89.99%	B: 83.00 to 86.99%	B minus: 80.00 to 82.99%
C plus: 77.00 to 79.99%	C: 73.00 to 76.99%	C minus: 70.00 to 72.99%
D plus: 67.00 to 69.99%	D: 63.00 to 66.99%	D minus: 60.00 to 62.99%
F: ≤ 59%		

Course Policies:

1. I will not change grades unless there is a clerical error in the calculation of your grade.
2. If you encounter an **unexpected** emergency outside of your control (e.g., COVID infection, eviction from your home, daycare closure, etc.) and you would like to request an extension on an assignment, please email me with as much notice as possible in advance of the assignment deadline. Although contacting me does not guarantee that your request will be approved, know that I take all requests seriously and will work with you to find appropriate resources and a path forward for completing your coursework.

Please note that my flexibility with respect to deadlines relates to emergencies **beyond your control**, and that this flexibility does not apply to vacation travel, conflicts with your work schedule, or other foreseeable circumstances that are within your control. I expect you to act ethically and honorably and not to take advantage of the current global crisis.

3. **Late submissions:** All assignments must be submitted by the indicated due date and time unless I have approved an extension (see above). For each 24-hour period that your assignment is late, your score will drop 10% (100% will become 90%). For example, if you submit a critical commentary two hours late, your grade will drop by 10%, and if you submit it 25 hours late, your grade will drop by 20%, and so on.
4. **Office hours:** Please take advantage of office hours to speak with me about anything related to this course, your research or career interests, or anything else that I may be able to help with. The more I know about how my students are doing and what they are thinking, the better I can ensure that the course will be an engaging and interesting experience. Please [book an appointment online](https://christina-tzeng.youcanbook.me) at <https://christina-tzeng.youcanbook.me> if you want to meet with me virtually. If you cannot make my weekly office hours, please email me to schedule an appointment.
5. **Academic integrity:** Cheating, plagiarism, or any form of academic dishonesty, including submitting A.I.-generated content as your own, will not be tolerated. If I find evidence of academic misconduct (e.g., working with another student on assignments or exams, posting any course material online, plagiarizing, using A.I.-generated content), you will receive a 0% on the assignment(s) in question without an opportunity to repeat the assignment, and I will file a report with the Office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development. Please visit the [office's website](https://www.sjsu.edu/studentconduct/policies/) for more information at <https://www.sjsu.edu/studentconduct/policies/>.

6. Accommodations

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, or see me during office hours. Presidential Directive 97-03 requires that students with disabilities requesting accommodations must [register with AEC](https://www.sjsu.edu/aec/) at <https://www.sjsu.edu/aec/> to establish a record of their disability. [Academic Senate Policy F06-2](https://www.sjsu.edu/aec/docs/F06-2.pdf) at <https://www.sjsu.edu/aec/docs/F06-2.pdf>

7. Statement of Inclusion and Diversity

We all have diverse personal experiences, identities, and values that bias how we view the world. I hope that we can embrace this diversity and work together to ensure each student feels like a valued member of the learning community. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, and culture. It is also my intent that students from all backgrounds and perspectives be well served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as an asset.

University Policies

Per [University Policy S16-9 \(PDF\)](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>), relevant university policy concerning all courses, such as student responsibilities, academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. and available student services (e.g. learning assistance, counseling, and other resources) are listed on the [Syllabus Information](https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php) (<https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php>) web page. Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.

Course Schedule

Note: The schedule is subject to modification (with fair warning) as the instructor deems necessary.

Module	Date	Topic	Assignments Due* (CC = Critical Commentary)
0	Th 8/22	Welcome/Course Orientation	
	Tu 8/27	Introduction to Psychology of Language	· Complete Welcome Survey (due by noon on Tu 8/27)
	Th 8/29	Introduction to Psychology of Language	· Complete assigned reading

1	Tu 9/3	Language Evolution 1: Overview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Complete assigned reading · Submit CC1a by noon on 9/3
	Th 9/5	Language Evolution 2: Animal Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Complete assigned reading · Submit CC1b by noon on 9/5
	Tu 9/10	Language Evolution 3: Theoretical Approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Complete assigned reading · Submit CC1c by noon on 9/10
	Th 9/12	Language Evolution 4: Theoretical Approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Complete assigned reading · Submit CC1d by noon on 9/12

2	Tu 9/17	Language Acquisition 1: Overview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Complete assigned reading · Submit CC2a by noon on 9/17
	Th 9/19	Language Acquisition 2: Underlying Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Complete assigned reading · Submit CC2b by noon on 9/19
	Tu 9/24	Language Acquisition 3: Processing Speech Input	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Complete assigned reading · Submit CC2c by noon on 9/24
	Th 9/26	Language Acquisition 4: Processing Speech Input	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Complete assigned reading · Submit CC2d by noon on 9/26

3	Tu 10/1	Bilingualism 1: Overview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Complete assigned reading · Submit CC3a by noon on 10/1
	Th 10/3	Bilingualism 2: Mental Lexicon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Complete assigned reading · Submit CC3b by noon on 10/3
	Tu 10/8	Bilingualism 3: Audio-Visual Processing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Complete assigned reading · Submit CC3c by noon on 10/8
	Th 10/10	Bilingualism 4: Potential Cognitive Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Complete assigned reading · Submit CC3d by noon on 10/10

4	Tu 10/15	Speech Perception 1: Overview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Complete assigned reading · No CC due
	Th 10/17	Speech Perception 2: Representation of Speech Sounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Complete assigned reading · Submit CC4b by noon on 10/17
	Tu 10/22	Speech Perception 3: Variation in Speech	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Complete assigned reading · Submit CC4c by noon on 10/22
	Th 10/24	Speech Perception 4: Voice Recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Complete assigned reading · Submit CC4d by noon on 10/24

5	Tu 10/29	Speech Production 1: Overview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Complete assigned reading · No CC due
	Th 10/31	Speech Production 2: Tone of Voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Complete assigned reading · Submit CC5b by noon on 10/31
	Tu 11/5	Speech Production 3: Accented Speech	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Complete assigned reading · Submit CC5c by noon on 11/5
	Th 11/7	Speech Production 4: Vocal Accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Complete assigned reading · Submit CC5d by noon on 11/7

6	Tu 11/12	Language & Culture 1: Overview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Complete assigned reading · No CC due
	Th 11/14	Language & Culture 2: Language & Thought	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Complete assigned reading · Submit CC6b by noon on 11/14
	Tu 11/19	Language & Culture 3: Language & Perception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Complete assigned reading · Submit CC6c by noon on 11/19
	Th 11/21	Final Project Meetings	
	Tu 11/26	Final Project Meetings	
	Th 11/28	No Class (Thanksgiving Day)	
	Tu 12/3	Language & Culture 4: Gesture & Sign Languages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Complete assigned reading · Submit CC6d by noon on 12/3
	Th 12/5	Topic TBD: Class will vote on topic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · TBD
M 12/16	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Final Project due by noon on 12/16 	

*All critical commentaries (CC) are due on Canvas by **noon PST on Tuesdays and Thursdays**. A complete list of peer-reviewed journal articles/book chapters will be on Canvas.