

Course Overview

The capacity for language is a central characteristic of the human mind. But what exactly do we “know” when we know our native language? And how exactly did we come to know it? Such questions have captivated some of the greatest minds in history, from Plato, Descartes and Leibniz to Russell, Wittgenstein and Chomsky. This course reviews the relevant scientific evidence, introduces leading ideas from contemporary linguistics and philosophy, and helps students develop the reasoning skills needed to assess competing proposals. The course engages students in central philosophical inquiries into the precise nature of linguistic knowledge, the origins of that knowledge, and the place of language within human cognition. Language is examined for the insight it provides into what it means to be human.

Instructors	Prof. Jonathan D. Bobaljik	Prof. Susanne Wurmbrand
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Office hours:	Wednesday, 2:00-3:00	Monday, 1:30-2:30

Section instructors

<i>Ana Bastos-Gee</i>	ana.bastos@huskymail.uconn.edu
	001D: F 8:00-8:50 E2 321
	002D: F 9:00-9:50 E2 321
<i>Zhanna Glushan</i>	zhanna.glushan@huskymail.uconn.edu
	004D: F 11:00-11:50 YNG 332
	006D: F 1:00-1:50 ARJ 405
	007D: F 2:00-2:50 MONT 213
<i>Nilüfer Şener</i>	nilufer.sener@huskymail.uconn.edu
	008D: Th 8:00-8:50 MONT 233
	009D: Th 9:00-9:50 HAWL 204
	010D: Th 11:00-11:50 HAWL 102
<i>Julio Villa-Garcia</i>	julio.villa-garcia@huskymail.uconn.edu
	003D: F 11:00-11:50 Castleman 204
	005D: F 12:00-12:50 KOONS 301
	011D: Th 11:00-11:50 ARJ 409

Apprentices	<i>Jungmin Kang</i>	jungmin.kang81@gmail.com
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Course material

We will make all course material available on *HuskyCT*. There are three folders on the course home page:

- *Readings*: Contains downloadable files and links to online reading material. Students are responsible for downloading and reading the appropriate material for each week prior to the lectures. Unless otherwise noted, material in the required readings is examinable.
- *Lecture notes*: Weekly summaries of the lectures, covering the main points, will be posted after the lectures. (Note: the lecture notes will not replace attending the lectures.) As a policy, we do not post the complete lecture notes/slides online.
- *Study guides*: Weekly study guides will be posted, which students can download prior to the lectures to facilitate note taking during the lectures.

Grading policy and course requirements

Grades		A	93-100	B-	80-82	D+	67-69
3 Exams (including final exam)	80%	A-	90-92	C+	77-79	D	63-66
Quizzes	10%	B+	87-89	C	73-76	D-	60-62
Participation in discussion sections	10%	B	83-86	C-	70-72	F	0-59

Exams:

There will be three regular, 50-minute exams, including the Final Exam, which carry equal weight. An optional Bonus Exam, covering the entire semester, will be held during the second hour of the final exam period, and will replace the lowest of the regular exam scores, provided this is to the student's benefit. (There is no risk in taking the Bonus Exam.)

The Bonus Exam will be the **ONLY** opportunity to compensate for a missed exam; no other form of make-up exam will be offered. Please take notice of the exam dates on the syllabus and plan accordingly.

Final Exam:

Preliminary date:	Wednesday, December 16, 10:30 - 12:30
First hour:	Final Exam (non-cumulative)
Second hour:	Bonus Exam (cumulative)

Please check the registrar's web page (<http://www.registrar.uconn.edu/examinfo.html>) for updates. University rules require that you take the final exam at the time published. Professors do not have the authority to grant exceptions – exceptions can only be made by the Dean of Students Office.

Quizzes and Participation:

Quizzes will be administered on a regular basis in the discussion sections. The quizzes are intended chiefly as practice for the exams, and will be assigned a grade of 100% if completed, or 0% if missed. The lowest two quiz scores will be dropped. Make-up options (if any) for missed quizzes will be determined by the instructor of the discussion section.

Participation grades will be assigned by the instructor of the discussion section, and will reflect the quality of contributions to class discussions and activities.

Academic Integrity (“The Student Code” <http://www.dosa.uconn.edu>)

Academic Dishonesty or misconduct of any type will not be tolerated in this class. Please refer to the Student Code <http://www.dosa.uconn.edu> for specific guidelines.

Schedule (subject to change — check HuskyCT)

MITECS: Wilson, Robert A. & Frank C. Keil. eds. 1999. *MIT Encyclopedia of the Cognitive Sciences*.

CLM: Crain, Stephen & Diane Lillo-Martin. 1999. *An Introduction to Linguistic Theory and Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Unit	Week	Date	Topic	Readings
UNIT I: The nature of human language	1	Aug 31 M Sep 2 W	Course overview Description and prescription	
	2	Sep 7 M Sep 9 W	<i>Labor Day — No classes</i> Empiricism and nativism	MITECS: <i>History of Nativism</i> , 586-588
	3	Sep 14 M Sep 16 W	Biological capacity for language The creative aspect of human language	MITECS: <i>Linguistics & Language</i> , §§1,3,4 MITECS: <i>Linguistics & Language</i> , §2
UNIT II: Linguistic theory	4	Sep 21 M Sep 23 W	Categories and abstractness Rules and Representations	ISAC & REISS: <i>Abstract representations</i> , 103-114
	5	Sep 28 M Sep 30 W	Linguistic universals, Q&A for exam FIRST EXAM	MITECS: <i>Linguistic Universals</i> , 476-478 No quiz
UNIT III: Children's acquisition of language	6	Oct 5 M Oct 7 W	Acquisition and nativism I Acquisition and nativism II	MITECS: <i>Innateness</i> , 408-409 MITECS: <i>Poverty of the Stimulus arguments</i> , 660-661 MARCUS (1993): <i>Negative evidence in lg. acquisition</i> , 54-59
	7	Oct 12 M Oct 14 W	Milestones of acquisition Phrase structure rules and recursion	CLM: <i>Stages of language acquisition</i> , 25-32
UNIT IV: Phrase structure	8	Oct 19 M Oct 21 W	Principles & parameters of phrase structure Syntactic operations	MITECS: <i>Syntax</i> , 818-820
	9	Oct 26 M Oct 28 W	Structure dependence I: Yes/No questions Structure dependence II: Constraints on co-reference	CLM: <i>Children's adherence to structure dependence</i> , 179-187 CLM: <i>Children's knowledge of constraints</i> , 153-163
	10	Nov 2 M Nov 4 W	Review of Units III & IV SECOND EXAM	No quiz
UNIT V: Biological perspectives on language	11	Nov 9 M Nov 11 W	<i>No classes</i> Cerebral localization, Critical period effects	LIBBEN: <i>Brain and language</i> , 463-476
	12	Nov 16 M Nov 18 W	Animal Communication and Language Evolution of Language	PINKER: <i>The Big Bang</i> , 332-349 LEWONTIN: <i>The evolution of cognition</i> , 107-132
		Nov 23 M Nov 25 W	<i>Thanksgiving Break — No classes</i> <i>Thanksgiving Break — No classes</i>	
UNIT VI: Language in exceptional circumstances	13	Nov 30 M Dec 2 W	Language in the visual modality Pidgins and Creoles	MITECS: <i>Sign languages</i> , 758-760 MITECS: <i>Creoles</i> , 206-208
	14	Dec 7 M Dec 9 W	Endangered Languages Review	BOBALJIK: <i>Language shift on the Kamchatka Peninsula</i> , 32-33