

**PSYCHOLOGY OF LANGUAGE**  
**PSYCH 492, Spring 2006**  
**Tues. & Thurs. 9:10-10:25 a.m.**  
**VMMC Room 16**

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**Instructor: Marsha Michels, M.S.**

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**Office Hours: Tues. & Thurs. 3-4:30 p.m. or by appointment**

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**Required Textbook: The Psychology of Language, by Paul Whitney, 1998, Houghton Mifflin**

**Course Objectives:**

Psychology of Language is a **Tier III capstone course**. There is a general prerequisite of 60 semester hours of course work and completion of Introductory Psychology. TIER III courses provide the final component of sequential study in general education and are designed to assist students in integrating course work at a more advanced level. Tier III courses are meant to provide an interdisciplinary approach to topical issues. It is anticipated that students will meet the following objectives:

1. describe how language shapes and is shaped by social interaction and cultural influences.
2. identify the biological factors at work in the acquisition and production of language.
3. demonstrate an understanding of how language processes overlap with cognition, memory and reading abilities.
4. demonstrate knowledge of the rule-based processes of language including phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics.
5. identify the theories of the origin of language and the development of language.

**Course Requirements:**

Exams

There will be three exams which will total 60% of your grade. Exam questions will cover assigned reading from your text, lectures, handouts, and assignments presented in class. Exams may contain short-answer, true/false, and multiple-choice questions. **There will be no make-up exams without an excused absence.** Vacation schedules, childcare, transportation problems, and work conflicts do not constitute excused absences. Excused absences most frequently fall under **documented** medical emergency. Upon completion of testing, the exam must be handed directly to the instructor. Students may not take exams if they arrive past the start of class.

Exam Dates:

Exam One: February 14th

Exam Two: March 23rd

Final Exam: To be announced. Final exam will occur during finals week.

Assignments: There will be a total of three assignments that will make up 40% of your grade. Below you will find a brief description of each project. A separate handout describing the projects and how they will be scored will be provided at a later date. **There will be no make-up assignments without an excused absence.**

1. Poster Session. This will be a group project consisting of three students. You will apply some principle of psycholinguistics to a question or issue that is of interest to you in your major area of study. (20%) Posters presented on Feb 2<sup>nd</sup> and Feb 7<sup>th</sup>.
2. Individual Oral Presentations. Compare or contrast two separate video tapings of commercials, political ads, or promotionals using the three dimensions of language. This assignment may be completed in groups of two. (10%) Presented on March 30th.
3. Transcription of two communication partners. This will be a transcription attending to the pragmatic or social rules of communication. (10%) Due April 20<sup>th</sup>.

**Late assignments are not accepted.** All papers shall be handed directly to the instructor on the due date before class begins or placed in the student drop box in CL 208. If placed in the student drop box, then they are due by 5:00 p.m. the day before the actual due date. It is to your advantage to keep copies or backups on a disk. Oral reports must be presented on their assigned dates.

**Grading:**

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Grade</u>	<u>Percent</u>
A	93-100%	C+	77-79%
A-	90-92%	C	73-76%
B+	87-89%	C-	70-72%
B	83-86%	D+	67-69%
B-	80-82%	D	60-66%
		F	59% or below

## **LECTURE TOPICS**

**Defining Communication**  
**Defining Language**  
**Theories of Language Origin**  
**Comparing Human and Nonhuman Communication**  
**Biological Foundations of Language**  
**Three Dimensions of Language**  
**Language Development**  
**Language and Culture**  
**Relationship of Language and Cognition**

### **Chapters for Psychology of Language, Whitney**

Required Reading:

Chapter One—page 3 through middle of page 23  
Start again in middle of page 27 to end of chapter.  
Can ignore Activity 1.1 on page 16 and 17.

Chapter Twelve—page 360 to middle of 372.  
Read conclusion on page 385 and 386.

Chapter Two—page 32 to middle of 45  
Begin again middle of page 59 to end of chapter.

Chapter Ten—page 303 to bottom of page 322.

Chapter Eleven—page 335 to middle of page 340.  
Begin again in middle of page 343, The Acquisition  
of Sign Language, to end of chapter.

**Reasonable Accommodation:** Reasonable accommodations are available for students who have a documented disability. Please notify the instructor during the first week of class of any accommodations needed for the course. Late notification may cause the requested accommodation to be unavailable. All accommodations must be approved through Jessica Nelson, Student Services, 546-9567.

### **Severe Weather/Emergency Closure**

The University does not close except under the most adverse conditions. Inclement weather, or any emergency that forces a declaration by the CEO and Chancellor may occur at any time during the day or evening, and may affect all or part of the instructional day. Public announcements over the radio or television are for closure or delay of classes only. To obtain a copy of the weather closure policy or view a list of radio stations that will be notified, visit this web site:

<http://www.vancouver.wsu.edu/adm/fo/psafety/weather.htm>

### **Academic Calendar**

To view the academic calendar visit the following web site:

[www.vancouver.wsu.edu/ss/spring.htm](http://www.vancouver.wsu.edu/ss/spring.htm)

**Grade Appeals:** All grade appeals must be submitted **in writing** to the instructor within five working days after the return of the assignment. The appeal should describe in detail your concerns and provide justification for the grade change.

**Class Attendance:** Consistent class attendance is highly recommended in order to provide continuity for your learning experience. The text is considered a supplement and my lectures are meant to augment the written material rather than duplicate it. I strongly encourage class participation and questions. We are all students as well as teachers. Your wealth of language experiences cannot match those of a single instructor. Because this is a TIER III course, students who participate are from a variety of areas of study. I consider that an advantage because of the diversity of interest and opinions of your peers.

**Class Rules:** 1) Be aware of professional/personal boundaries 2) Give others a turn to speak 3) Respect the opinions of others 4) For the courtesy of your peers and the instructor, please arrive to class on time.

### **Suggested Readings:**

COMMON ERRORS IN ENGLISH USAGE by Paul Brians, Washington State University, 2003. This book provides the reader with an array of examples of word origins, definitions, pronunciations, multiple meanings and appropriate word usage.

WORD PLAY by Peter Farb, 1974. This book covers a variety of topics such as evolution of language, language development, cultural differences amongst languages and word origins.

THE LANGUAGE INSTINCT , HOW THE MIND CREATES LANGUAGE by Steven Pinker, MIT, 1994. This book discusses language evolution, language development, cognition and language, semantics, syntax and many more language related topics.

### **Suggested Readings, continued**

PREDICTING NEW WORDS by Allan Metcalf, MacMurray College, 2002. Discusses rules that help predict which words or phrases become successfully common in our language.

PSYCHOLOGY OF LANGUAGE by David W. Carroll, Thomson, Wadsworth, 2004. This is a college level textbook reviewing the broad field of psycholinguistics.