

SCSD 633: Language Development Fall 2018

Time: Mondays, 12:30-2:30 pm

Place: 2001 McGill College, Room 869

Instructor: Professor Laura Gonnerman
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Office Hours: Mondays, 2:30-3pm or by appt

Course Goals

Learning your first language is one of the most amazing feats you will accomplish in your lifetime—yet you do it virtually effortlessly and without specific instruction! How does language emerge in an individual? What are the mechanisms that are involved? What are the stages that normal children go through in acquiring a language? What differences are there in language development depending on the particular language learned? How does society (parents, peers) effect language development? In this course we will look at current answers to these and other questions in an effort to understand how it is possible for human infants to become competent speakers of their native language.

In addition to learning facts about human language development, this course will also give you an opportunity to learn to evaluate different theories of language acquisition. In addition to the textbook, you will read primary source material, giving you practice in uncovering the important questions asked, determining whether the methods used address these questions, and critically evaluating the conclusions drawn. You will gain an appreciation of the issues involved in language acquisition and the methods used to find answers.

Course Requirements

The requirements for this course are very simple:

1) Attend class – With the volume of information covered, class attendance is very important. This importance is amplified by the structure of the course. While the structure of the course is based on a lecture format, I expect students to ask questions and actively participate in being sure they understand the material. Also, the material covered in lecture includes some of the information from the readings, but there will be additional information provided that is not in the reading. You are responsible for all of it!

2) Read each assigned chapter or article carefully and thoughtfully in order to participate fully in the class discussions and understand the lectures. At times, to stimulate discussion, I may ask you to defend a particular theoretical position or provide an explanation of a particular method or empirical finding. The success of the course depends upon your participation. Likewise, your final grade is dependent on your participation.

3) Written work in the course will include homework, as well as in-class exams. There will also be a midterm exam in class. The final exam will give you an opportunity to think through and integrate the issues raised during the semester. More detailed information about the exams and assignments will be distributed later in the semester.

Course Grading Scheme

Participation/Quizzes – You are required to complete the assigned course readings. Participation is evaluated based primarily upon your preparedness for class and the relevance of your comments to ongoing discussion. Additionally, there may be unannounced quizzes given during class time. – **10%**.

Homework Assignments – There will be homework given out during the semester. This will give you the opportunity to analyze data from children. – **20%**.

Midterm Exam – There will be an in-class midterm exam. – **30%**.

Final Exam – There will be a **final exam**, the details of which will be described later in the semester – **40%**.

In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

Credit Hours: 3

Missed Exams and Late assignments.

Homework assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date specified. Homework may not be handed in for credit after other students' graded homework assignments have been returned without permission of the instructor. If the student has a good reason for handing in an assignment late, and contacts me before the work is due, an alternative due date can be arranged. These will be judged on a case-by-case basis.

Academic Integrity

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see <http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity/> for more information).

L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l'honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site <http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity/>).