

Linguistics H201
 Honors Introduction to Language
 Spring, 2004

Syllabus

Instructor: Craig Roberts, Associate Professor
 Meetings: TR 9:30-11:18
 Location: Derby Hall 030
 Office: 210 Oxley Hall; 292-8302
 Email: roberts.21@osu.edu
 Office Hours: M 1:30 – 3:30, T 12:30 – 1:30, and by appointment

Required Texts:

Steven Pinker (1995) *The Language Instinct: How the Mind Creates Language*.
 Harper Perennial.
 Department of Linguistics, The Ohio State University (1998) *The Language Files, 8th
 Edition: Materials for an Introduction to Language and Linguistics*. OSU Press.

The principal goal of this course is to help you to think about human language in a more informed way and give you a taste of its relevance to current intellectual and social issues. The book by Pinker was a bestseller a few years ago. He raises in a particularly clear and lively way a number of questions about language and the human mind, and about language in society. These questions will be the focus of our discussions. *The Language Files* is basically a workbook, and the readings and exercises from it are chosen to give you a more concrete feeling for the material Pinker discusses.

Course requirements:

- Class attendance is mandatory. If you have to miss more than two class meetings during the quarter, talk with me about the reason for your absence.
- The readings are intended to form the basis for discussion. It is expected that each student will do all the readings **before class** on the day they are scheduled on the syllabus (below). This is the most important part of your work in the course. Class participation and evidence of preparedness will account for 25% of your grade.
- Most weeks there will be several exercises assigned from the *Language Files*; these are to be handed in the day they are noted on the schedule and often will be (at least partly) discussed in class that day. The exercises will involve material that we have not yet discussed in detail in class. I have consistently found that assigning such challenging homework gets students to prepare for class and results in livelier, more engaged class discussion. Homework assignments will be graded on a plus/check/minus system, a check indicating satisfactory completion with good effort, minus indicating poor effort or incomplete work, and plus indicating a perfect performance or exceptional insight. Altogether the exercises will count for 35% of the grade.
- A quiz on phonetic transcription and phonology will count for another 15%.
- A short 7 page (maximum) paper is due in class at the last meeting; no extensions will be permitted. I will offer a list of acceptable topics by the beginning of the second

week in class. I understand that it is difficult for students in a beginning course to be particularly original. But evidence of hard thinking and careful writing (and re-writing) will be very important. You are required to turn in a preliminary draft of the paper in the 8th week of class, for comments and suggestions by the instructor; problems with that draft will *not* count against you, but turning it in counts for 5% of the grade. The final paper will account for 20% of the grade.

If you are concerned about your grade, you can earn the equivalent of check-credit for one homework each time you attend one of the Linguistics Department's weekly colloquia and present me with a coherent one-page summary of the topic of the talk (which doesn't mean you have to understand it all). If you attend one of these talks, you will need to have attendance verified with one of the standard forms, which I can make available to you.

I also hope that you will feel free to come to office hours or make an appointment with me if you have any problems with the course, or (more happily) would like to talk more about the course material or related matters.

Tentative Class Schedule:

You are expected to do readings and exercises **before** the class period on which they're noted, unless the schedule is explicitly changed by the instructor. Exercises should be neat and legible, to be turned in.

	TUESDAY	THURSDAY
Week 1	3/30 Introduction	4/1 Introduction Read Language File 1.2, pp.6-10. Read Pinker, Chapter 1(Introduction).
Week 2	4/6 Syntax Read Language Files 6.1 – 6.3, pp.151-170. Read Pinker, Chapter 2 (Chatterboxes).	4/8 Syntax , cont'd Exercises in File 6.1: 2–4; File 6.2: 1, 2. Read Files 11.1-11.3 of the Files (Language Contact), pp.349-364.
Week 3	4/13 Syntax , cont'd: Exercises in File 6.3: 1, 2a-e and 2j. Read Files 6.4 - 6.6, pp.171-190.	4/15 Language and Thought Read Pinker, Chapter 3 (Mentalese). Prepare and hand in a careful outline of his arguments in this chapter. Read File 7.5, pp.215-218 (Color Terms). Read Section 13 of the Files (Visual Languages), pp.425-440.
Week 4	4/20 Phonetics Read Files 3.1 – 3.3, pp.33-51, and the handout on Phonetic Detail. Read Pinker, Chapter 4 (How Language Works).	4/22 Phonetics , cont'd In File 3.5, pp.54-56, do the exercises that are assigned in class on Wednesday.
Week 5	4/27 Phonetics , cont'd In-class transcription quiz Morphology Read Files 5.1 - 5.4, pp.111-133.	4/29 Morphology , cont'd Read Pinker, Chapter 5 (Words, Words, Words).
Week 6	5/4 Phonology Read Pinker, Chapter 6 (The Sounds of Silence). Read Files 4.1 – 4.3, pp.67-91.	5/6 Phonology , cont'd Exercises in File 4.4: 1.2, 1.5, 1.7, 2.5, and 3.2. Read Files 4.5 and 4.6, pp.102-109. Read File 15.1, writing systems, pp.463-470.
Week 7	5/11 Morphology , cont'd Read File 5.5, pp.134-137. Exercises in File 5.6: 1.2, 1.3, 1.5, 2.5, 3.2 Semantics Read Files 7.1 - 7.4, pp.195-214.	5/13 Language Universals Read Pinker, Chapters 7 (Talking Heads) and 8 (The Tower of Babel). Read Files 14.1 - 14.4, pp.441-460.
Week 8	5/18 Psycholinguistics Read Pinker, Chapter 9 (Baby Born Talking). Read Files 9.2 – 9.5, pp.259-286. Draft of essay due in class.	5/20 Psycholinguistics , cont'd Read Pinker, Chapter 10 (Language Organs and Grammar Genes). Read File 9.1, pp.249-258.
Week 9	5/25 Language and Evolution Read Pinker, Chapter 11 (The Big Bang). Read Files Section 2, pp.17-32.	5/27 Language and Society Read Pinker, Chapter 12 (The Language Mavens). Additional readings will be assigned.
Week 10	6/1 Language and Society , cont'd Read Files 10.1 - 10.3, pp.299-311; 10.5, pp.318-324.	6/3 Language and Cognition Read Pinker, Chapter 13 (Mind Design). Final essay due in class.