

ADVANCED UNDERGRADUATE SEMINAR in LINGUISTICS
01:615:497 **FALL 2026****Instructor**

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Meetings

Fridays
HH-A1 CAC
10:20 am – 1:20 pm

Student Support Hours

- **Wednesdays 9-10 am**
- **Room 304** of the Linguistics Building (18 Seminary Place, yellow house across from AB)
- And **by appointment** on Zoom
- What are these hours for? Anything really! They're for you! Come and talk to me about course content you would like clarification on, study skills, poster design, graduate school applications, possible career paths, or anything else that comes to mind.

Course Description

- In this course, you will be learning how to design a linguistics experiment; how to carry out the research carefully and ethically; how to make conclusions from the empirical data you obtain, and connect them back to the linguistic theory and analysis; and how to communicate your findings to an audience in a clear and compelling way.
- This is a Capstone course. That means that in this course, you are synthesizing what you have learned in your major, taking ownership of your learning, and creating something new that builds on prior classes. It therefore requires senior status. You should also have taken 01:615:201 and at least one of the core B courses (305, 315, 325, 350).
- After seeing Advanced Seminar poster presentations for many semesters, I realized that many students had difficulty formulating hypotheses, generating predictions, designing clean experiments, and discussing their findings. Many of them also seemed to shy away from linguistic theory, and instead gravitated towards topics that aren't the ones we cover in our core Linguistics courses. As the main experimentalist in the department, I was in dismay! I want YOU all to have these skills and discover the beauty of good experimentation that builds on the linguistics you have learned in your B-level classes. I had never taught this course before, so I came up with a very different idea for this semester, and I am SUPER excited about it, because I get to introduce you to linguistic phenomena and a line of child language research that I find fascinating and am passionate about. Y'all this stuff is so cool! I hope that even if you are a little nervous about experimental research, or the linguistic content from those courses, you will put your trust in me to guide you through the material so that you arrive at a level of comfort and mastery that might surprise and impress you. And most of all, I hope that you will have fun in doing so! Plus, we get to play with toys and kids!

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- Unlike in previous instantiations of this seminar, in this version, you will be demonstrating that good science should be replicable. We will cover a set of pre-determined hand-picked topics. For each, we will be taking a deep dive into a specific aspect of linguistic theory that should be testable and generate clear predictions for human (child) behavioral responses. We will then review now-classic language acquisition research that took up this challenge and see what was found. Then YOU will be carefully replicating these experiments yourself from scratch, as if following a recipe, and seeing if your findings align with theirs, or not, and what we conclude from this. You will then have the chance to present the linguistic theory, the experiment, and your findings to the entire department—some of whom may know *something* about the theory, but most of whom (besides me!) probably know *nothing* about these experiments. This is your chance to educate the members of our department about something new and exciting about experimental research and its value to our field!

Required Texts and Course Materials

- There is no textbook for this course. I have selected “classic” readings, which are on the Canvas site as pdfs in each Module.
- Heads up! The papers we are reading in this class were published between the 1980s and the 2020s. Within that timeframe, there were many different developments in syntactic and semantic theory. And when new frameworks came out, psycholinguists and acquisitionists were not necessarily quick to embrace them to capture human behavioral responses and cognitive processes, for various reasons. So throughout this class, we might choose to talk about a phenomenon as the author did to keep things simple (knowing it may not be the way researchers talk about it now). What’s important is for us to make a connection between the concepts and the linguistic theory, the predictions they generate, and the behavioral responses researchers observe in experiments, and what this means for acquisition.

Learning Goals**Course Learning Goals**

At the completion of this course, you be able to

- apply the tools of linguistic analysis from the core courses to a particular topic.
- identify projects related to the topic of the course.
- search a variety of resources for material relevant to your project.
- work in teams to present your findings in a structured format.
- respond to questions and comments about your project.

Department Learning Goals

- Students will be able to reason about language scientifically; demonstrate knowledge of cross-linguistic variability and universal patterns in language; evaluate a range of views on

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the nature, origin, and/or structure of language; and identify what someone knows when they know a language.

- Majors and minors who complete the core courses in Linguistics will demonstrate technical mastery over the tools of linguistic analysis in syntax, phonology, semantics and pragmatics and apply linguistic theory in these areas. They will be able to investigate and analyze linguistic data; demonstrate strong problem-solving skills; extend their understanding of theoretical linguistics into other domains of linguistic research; and apply the techniques of linguistics to new topics. Majors will access current research in the field and be able to communicate the findings and relevance of linguistic research to both an audience in the discipline and a lay audience.

Grading

- This course is graded on a **P/NC** basis. To pass, you must have **at least a 70%**.
- I make a practice of assigning **Warning grades**, in large part to support student success. A W1, W2, or W3 activates attention by our UPD, and possibly by the Dean of Students, that a student may need additional support early on in the semester, or is not engaging in a way that is leading to the best chance of success—and I want success for you in this course! Please familiarize yourself with the [REGIS site](#) and [Warning grade system](#).

Grading Components

STAGE 1		
• Participation (Individual, Group)	10%	<i>Show up prepared. Participate. Collaborate.</i>
• Reading Q&As (N=5)	10%	
STAGE 2		
• Project Outline	5%	<i>Engage in Language Science:</i>
• Experiment Design Writeup	10%	<i>Design an experiment.</i>
STAGE 3		
• Experiment Implementation	20%	<i>Run your experiment. Interpret your findings.</i>
STAGE 4		
• Poster Drafts (1, 2, Final)	20%	<i>Communicate your research clearly.</i>
STAGE 5		
• Presentation to Department	20%	<i>Present your research to an audience.</i>
STAGE 6		
• Individual Reflection	5%	<i>Reflect and bring it all together.</i>
TOTAL	100%	



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Schedule of Topics

Date	Assignments Due for Class	In-Class Topic	To Do Afterwards in Prep. for Next Class
STAGE 1			
Friday, Sept. 4	N/A	First Day Welcome Introduction and Survey	READ: Crain & Nakayama (1987) (stop at end of section 5) and Thornton (1990) (pp. 9-13, 52-55, 59, 63-71)
Friday, Sept. 11	Q&A #1, 2	Topics 1, 2: polar questions and structure <i>wh</i> -phrases & traces	READ: de Villiers & Roeper (1995) and Thornton & Crain (1994) (pp. 230-241)
Friday, Sept. 18	Q&A #3	Topic 3: long distance <i>wh</i> -questions and successive cyclic movement	READ: <u>one</u> of these: Crain & McKee (1985) Deen & Timyam (2018) (stop at end of pg. 177) and Lidz et al. (2004) and Syrett & Lidz (2009) or Kiguchi & Thornton (2004)
Friday, Sept. 25	Q&A #4, 5	Topics 4,5: Condition C, c-command, and reference quantifier raising, c-command, and landing sites	READ: Crain et al. (2004) and <u>one</u> of these two: Gualmini et al. (2001) Chierchia et al. (2001) and Gualmini & Crain (2004) and Goro, Minai, & Crain (2005)
Friday, Oct. 2	Q&A #6, 7	Topics 6, 7: Downward Entailment: -dependence on structure -arguments of <i>every</i> , -scalar implicature cancellation	READ: Hochstein et al. (2016) and Tieu, Križ, & Chemla (2019) permission to skip 4.2.3-4.2.4, 4.3 and 5.2.4, 5.2.5.
Friday, Oct. 9	Q&A #8, 9	Topics 8, 9: Implicatures: epistemic reasoning, scalar implicatures homogeneity, plural definite descriptions	DO: Groups: Project Proposal



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Schedule of Topics

Date	Assignments Due for Class	In-Class Topic	To Do Afterwards in Prep. for Next Class
STAGE 2			
Friday, Oct. 16	Project Proposal (A-E)	Experiment Design Workshopping	DO: Draft of Experiment Design (Stimuli, Procedure, Trials, Predictions)
Friday, Oct. 23	Experiment Design	Present (Experiment): Groups A, B, C	DO (A-C): Implement feedback
Friday, Oct. 30		Present (Experiment): Groups D, E	DO (D-E): Implement feedback
STAGE 3			
Oct. 25–Nov. 8	Run your experiment!	N/A	DO: Run your experiment! DO: Poster Draft 1
STAGE 4			
Friday, Nov. 6	Poster Draft 1 (without findings)	N/A (Prof. Syrett presenting @ BUCLD)	DO: Poster Draft 2 (with findings)
Friday, Nov. 13	Poster Draft 2 (with findings)	Present (Posters): Groups A-E	DO: Poster Final Draft
Friday, Nov. 20	Poster Final Draft	Practice Presentation Q&A	DO: Presentation Q&A
Wednesday, Nov. 25		N/A (day before Thanksgiving)	DO: Practice!
STAGE 5			
Friday, Dec. 4	Bring Poster, Dress in Business Casual	Presentations! **ABW 5050**	DO: Individual Reflection
STAGE 6			
Thursday, Dec. 10	Individual Reflection	N/A	N/A

👉 **PLEASE NOTE:** Your **FINAL PRESENTATION** to the Department on Friday, 12/4, will take place in **ABW 5050**, not in our normal meeting place in HH! 👉

Our Classroom Community

- Part of what makes learning within a classroom community so much fun and so memorable is that no two people see the world the same way, and no two people have the same lived experience, and that is a beautiful thing. In our classroom, we will encounter people with different linguistic and ethnic backgrounds, interests, and perspectives, and we will come together to engage in respectful, supportive communication that celebrates diversity and elevates each other. Everyone is valued. Every genuine information-seeking question is valid. Every observation in the course of collaborative scientific inquiry is valuable.

Policies and Information

Attendance and Participation

- Your consistent, active attendance and regular participation are encouraged, expected, and incredibly welcome! When you show up in this way, it will make our class enjoyable and allow you to bring your learning of this material to a whole new level. The design of this course and the kind of material we are covering are unique relative to your other Linguistics courses. By participating fully (being present and engaged for every single class, completing the readings and Q&As, asking substantive questions and offering answers to others' questions, collaborating with group members, completing assignments in a timely and responsible manner, and bringing your full self to class) you will be able to not only pass the class, but understand the material and synthesize the material from your other linguistic courses in a way that will be genuinely meaningful for this last year of your major.
- Unexpected events happen in life that we are unable to control, and we all have commitments outside of academics. One of the best skills we can develop in life is learning how to handle these various challenges with clear communication and with grace. Please let me and your group members know when constraints arise that impact your ability to be fully present.
- I take deadlines seriously, because they are a measure of accountability, and deadline extensions create undesirable domino effects. That said, if you find that you cannot meet a deadline or will be absent from a class, please communicate with me *in advance* (as possible), so that we can work together to identify a solution to support your temporary needs to get back on track. For group work, please communicate with your group!
- If you are absent, I will notice, and miss you! Please report any absences in advance using [the University self-reporting absence system](#) AND email me.
- I will never ask for or accept a medical note to justify an absence. (Instructors are not permitted to do so!)
- If you have a prolonged health and/or financial issues that is impacting your academics or overall well-being over an *extended* period of time, please contact the Dean of Students (deanofstudents@echo.rutgers.edu).
- Please consult the University list of approved [Absences for Religious Observations](#).

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[University policy 10.2.7 Course Attendance](#) indicates that students should be excused without penalty for absences from class because of religious observance and allowed to make up work missed because of such absence. Examinations and special required out-of-class activities should generally not be scheduled on days when religiously observant students refrain from participating in secular activities. *Students should provide timely notification to instructors about necessary absences for religious observances and are responsible for making up missed work/exams.

Disability Accommodations

- To receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, any student with a disability must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), participate in an intake interview, and provide proper documentation. If this applies to you, please coordinate with ODS.
- ODS will provide me with a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) for each student in question, cc'ing the student. I will reach out to each of those students at the start of the semester to have a one-on-one conversation about how to best support their needs within the parameters of what is required, along with what else may be possible aligned with best pedagogical practices.

Learning Support

- If you find there is an approach to instruction or presentation of content that supports your learning, please let me know, and I will do my best to accommodate. No one has the same brain! We all learn differently and we all have our own quirks about what works for us to retain material or help things make sense. I like to read the first chapter of my fiction books out loud to connect with the story and settle in. I remember the place on the page or slide where I read something. And I'll remember something much better if I read it myself instead of hearing it. (This is why I can listen to Agatha Christie audiobooks over and over again and still get excited about the endings!) See? We all have our ways of approaching material, and that's part of what makes us unique.

Academic Integrity Policy and AI Usage

- By enrolling in this course, you assume responsibility for familiarizing yourself with the Academic Integrity Policy and the possible penalties (including suspension and expulsion) for violating the policy.
- Please consult [the University website on Academic Integrity](#).
- I am the Chair of the Linguistics Department and a former Undergraduate Program Director. I am also the designated, trained Academic Integrity Facilitator for the Department. If you violate the Academic Integrity policy, I must proceed through the steps required by the Office of Student Conduct. I have handled *numerous* cases of academic integrity violations over the years, with my own students and students in other classes. It is never fun. In the vast majority of cases I have handled, students resort to cheating, plagiarizing, or fabricating

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information (i.e., using AI or online sources that are not allowed) because they are confused by the material and do not want to admit it, are falling behind, aren't prepared enough, are overwhelmed by personal circumstances, or are in a rush and need to meet a deadline quickly. Very few cases involve malicious intent and total disregard for the rules. This means that most cases may have been preventable with open, transparent conversation with the instructor beforehand! It is not worth it to have a violation on your record and receive a 0 on an assignment, or worse! Please talk to me if you feel tempted to violate the policy or resort to a resource that is not allowed!

- You may only use Chat GPT other AI sources or sources found via online searches as permitted within the instructions provided for each assignment. I will be explicit about what is allowed, where, and when for each assignment. If you are *ever* in doubt about what is allowed, simply ask me! AI can be fantastic for stimuli creation, so it is not completely off limits in this class. But be on guard: this is not a free-for-all. There are clear limits. For example, YOU must do the reading, summaries, and final reflection on your own! You are absolutely NOT allowed to skip out on doing the readings on your own, and you are absolutely NOT allowed to have any other sources perform summaries of the readings for you. Because the summaries are not being used for any formal purpose, you are also not permitted to use any AI resource to polish your wording of your summaries or your final reflection, other than check your grammar as you write. Take this class as an opportunity to really dive into and learn about an area of research you haven't yet explored, and have fun with it!

Student Support, Wellness, and Various Services

- [Student Success Essentials](#)
- [Student Support Services](#)
- [Dean of Students – Student Support Office](#)
- [The Learning Centers](#)
- [Rutgers Libraries](#)
- [Office of Disability Services](#)
- [Basic Needs Assistance](#) (food, housing, and other essentials)
- [Rutgers Student Food Pantry](#)
- [Bias Incident Reporting](#)
- [Office of Veteran and Military Programs and Services](#)
- [Student Health Services](#)
- [Counseling, Alcohol and Other Drug Assistance Program & Psychiatric Services \(CAPS\)](#)
- [UWill](#): free immediate access to teletherapy
- [Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance](#)