

PHIL G4490 Language and Mind

Thursday 11–12:50, Kent 413

Instructor: Daniel Rothschild

Office Hours: Thursday 2-4, Philosophy Hall 713

Topic:

This class is about what language is, how it relates to our more general cognitive abilities, and the relationship between language and thought.

Prerequisites:

You should have taken a course in philosophy of mind or language (or, possibly, metaphysics or epistemology) or an advanced course in cognitive psychology. There will be a large amount of sometimes difficult reading, especially in the philosophy component. Those without any experience with philosophy may find these parts of the class very hard. As this is an advanced class I will have correspondingly high expectations for the level of your weekly responses and take-home exams. IF YOU ARE NOT SURE ABOUT WHETHER YOU HAVE THE REQUISITE QUALIFICATIONS TO TAKE THIS CLASS, YOU NEED TO TALK TO ME AFTER CLASS TODAY.

Readings: There will be weekly readings that vary in length from a couple of short articles to an entire short book. You need to do these readings *before* the class in which we discuss them. Readings not online will be on Courseworks, except, Jerry Fodor's *Modularity of Mind*, which I've ordered at Labyrinth.

Short responses: Most weeks I will ask you to write me a short assignment (approximately 150-250 words) on a topic or question related to the reading for that week. These responses must be sent by email by 4 pm on the Wednesday before class.

Take-home tests: Most of the assessment will be by take-home test. These will consist of short essay questions on topics we've discussed in class. There will be two of these tests: a midterm and a final one. *All take-home tests will be graded anonymously.*

Research Paper (optional): Those who wish may substitute a research paper for the final take-home test (to do this you must receive at least an "A-" on the midterm). Topic must be approved by me, but the possibilities are wide.

Discussion: Participation in discussion is strongly encouraged and may be (positively) factored into grading.

Grading: Short responses 30%, take-home midterm 20%, take-home final 50%.

List of Topics and Readings (please refer to Courseworks for exact schedule and to find electronic copies of readings not in the public domain)

Part I – The Status of Language as a Part of the Mind

The Nature of Language: The Chomskyan Turn

Chomsky, Review of Skinner

Santorini and Kroch, The Syntax of Natural Language, Chapter 1

<http://www.ling.upenn.edu/~beatrice/syntax-textbook/ch1.html>

Poverty of Stimulus and Language Learning

Crain and Pietroski, Nature, Nurture, and Universal Grammar

<http://www.springerlink.com/content/w830227040kq5645/>

Lidz et al. What infants know about syntax but couldn't have learned: experimental evidence for syntactic structure at 18 months. (And replies by critics)

<http://www.psych.northwestern.edu/waxman/one.pdf>

<http://www.ling.umd.edu/~jlidz/Teaching/F05Seminar/hatemail.pdf>

Modularity and Language

Fodor, The Modularity of Mind (entirety)

Chomsky, Reflections on Language (selections)

The Evolution of Language

Pinker and Bloom, Natural Language and Natural Selection

Chomsky, Hauser and Fitch, The Faculty of Language: What is it, who has it, and how did it evolve?

<http://www.sciencemag.org/cgi/content/abstract/sci%3B298/5598/1569>

Pinker and Jackendoff, The faculty of language: What's special about it?

http://hps.arts.unsw.edu.au/hps_content/new/cog_sci/pinker_jackendoff_II.pdf

Optional:

Fitch, et al. The evolution of the language faculty: clarifications and implications

<http://www.wjh.harvard.edu/~mnkylab/publications/languagespeech/FitchHauserChomskyLangFacCog.pdf>

Idiolects (and I-language)

Heck, Idiolects

<http://frege.brown.edu/heck/pdf/unpublished/Idiolects.pdf>

Wiggins, Languages as Social Objects (Jstor)

Part II - The Relationship Between Language and Thought

The LOT and Natural Language

Fodor, The Language of Thought, Chapter 2

Dennett, A Cure for the Common Code? in *Brainstorms*

Harman, Language Learning in *Reasoning, Meaning and Mind* (which is online through CLIO)

Philosophical Skepticism about the LOT and Theories of Content

Searle, Minds, Brains, and Programs

<http://www.bbsonline.org/Preprints/OldArchive/bbs.searle2.html>

Harman and Greenberg, Conceptual Role Semantics

<http://www.princeton.edu/~harman/Papers/CRS.pdf>

Non-LOT Theories of Content

Lewis, Reduction of Mind (selections)

Stalnaker, Inquiry (Chapters 1 and 2)

Whorfianism

Whorf, The Relation of Habitual Thought and Behavior to Language

<http://learn-gs.org/library/etc/1-4-whorf.pdf>

Pinker, The Language Instinct, chapter 3.

Daniel Dennett, Kinds of Mind (selections)

Philosophical Whorfianism and Anti-Whorfianism

(review Fodor, Language of Thought, ch 2)

Davidson, On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme

Blackburn, Spreading the Word (pp. 134-140)

Block, Advertisement for a Semantics for Psychology, selections

Empirical Anti-Whorfianism

Bloom and Keil, Thinking through Language

<http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/links/doi/10.1111/1468-0017.00175>

Gleitman et al., Hard Words

http://www.leaonline.com/doi/abs/10.1207/s15473341ld0101_4

Hespos and Spelke, Conceptual Precursors to Language

<http://www.wjh.harvard.edu/~lds/pdfs/hespos2004>

Empirical Whorfianism 1: Space and Language

Pederson et al. Semantic Typology and Spatial Conceptualization

Gleitman & Li, Turning the Tables

Levinson et al: Returning the Tables

Empirical Whorfianism 2: Number and Language

Dehaene, The Number Sense, ch 1 - 5

Gallistel, C. R., and R. Gelman. "Non-verbal Numerical Cognition: From Reals to Integers." *Trends Cogn Sci* 4 (2000): 59-65.

Carey, Bootstrapping and the Origins of Concepts

<http://www.wjh.harvard.edu/~lds/pdfs/carey2004.pdf>

Gordon, Numerical Cognition without Words

<http://www.sciencemag.org/cgi/content/abstract/306/5695/496>

Gelman and Gallistel, Language and the Origin of Numerical Concepts

<http://www.sciencemag.org/cgi/content/abstract/sci;306/5695/441>

Part III: Linguistic Analogy with Morality

Marc Hauser, Moral Mind, selections

John Mikhail TBA