

COGS 101C: Language

Winter 2022

Mandeville Center B-210, Tues / Thurs, 5:00 – 6:20 pm

Instructor: **Kensy Cooperrider** (kcooperrider@ucsd.edu)
Office hours: Thursday, 4 pm - 5 pm (see Canvas link)

TA: **Sean Trott** (sttrott@ucsd.edu)
Discussion sections: RWAC 0121, Monday, 4:00 - 4:50 & 5:00 - 5:50 pm
Office hours: Tuesday, 4 pm - 5 pm (see Canvas link)

Course description: This course is an introduction to the cognitive science of language. It does not attempt a comprehensive overview but rather a broad survey, covering topics such as: how human language differs from animal communication systems; how languages, both spoken and signed, are structured and how they vary; how people use language to communicate about concrete and abstract ideas; how conversation works; how language is processed in the brain; and how it may have evolved in our species.

Course objectives: Students will become familiar with a number of major issues in the study of human language and cognition, as well as develop their abilities to critically evaluate research in the cognitive sciences.

Schedule:

Week 1: Language in broad perspective **(**no sections or office hours this week**)**

Tues, Jan 4 – Course intro: Language in broad perspective

Thurs, Jan 6 – Animal communication systems
Optional reading: Pagel, '[Q&A: What is human language...](#)'

Week 2: Building blocks of language

Tues, Jan 11 – Sounds
Listening: Lingthusiasm #12: '[Sounds you can't hear](#)' [transcript [here](#)]

Thurs, Jan 13 – Morphemes and words
Listening: Lingthusiasm #16: '[Learning parts of words](#)' [transcript [here](#)]
Quiz 1

Week 3: Domains of meaning—Space, senses

Tues, Jan 18 – Space

Reading: Majid et al., ‘The case for space’ (on Canvas)

Thurs, Jan 20 – The senses

Reading: Yong, ‘[Why do most languages have so few words for smells?](#)’

Optional listening: Many Minds, ‘[The Scents of Language](#)’ [transcript [here](#)]

Quiz 2

Week 4: Domains of meaning—Numbers

Tues, Jan 25 – Numbers

Reading: Everett, ‘[How do you count with numbers?](#)’

Thurs, Jan 27: **MIDTERM 1**

Week 5: Domains of meaning—Time and metaphors

Tues, Feb 1 – Time

Reading: Cooperrider & Núñez, ‘[How we make sense of time](#)’

Thurs, Feb 3 – Metaphor and analogy

Reading: Casasanto & Bottini, ‘Spatial language and abstract concepts’ (on Canvas)

Quiz 3

Week 6: Language in interaction

Tues, Feb 8 – Conversation

Reading: Dingemanse & Enfield, ‘Let’s talk’ (on Canvas)

Thurs, Feb 10 – Deixis

Reading: no reading

Quiz 4

Week 7: Language in the brain

Tues, Feb 15 – Simulating language

Reading: Bergen, ‘Embodiment, simulation and meaning’ (on Canvas)

Thurs, Feb 17 – Reading in the brain

Reading: Dehaene et al., ‘Illiterate to literate’ (on Canvas)

Quiz 5

Week 8: Gesture

Tues, Feb 22 – Gesture

Reading: Cooperrider & Goldin-Meadow, ‘Gesture, language, and cognition’ (on Canvas)

Thurs, Feb 24 – **MIDTERM #2**

Week 9: Sign languages

Tues, Mar 1 – Established sign languages

Reading: Pyers, ‘Sign languages’ (on Canvas)

Thurs, Mar 3 – Emerging languages

Reading: Goldin-Meadow, ‘On inventing language’ (on Canvas)

Quiz 6

Week 10: Evolution of language

Tues, Mar 8 – When, why, and how did language evolve?

Reading: Cooperrider, [‘If language began in the hands...’](#)

Thurs, Mar 10 – In-class Final Exam review

FINAL EXAM: Thursday, Mar 17 (location TBA)

Grade components

Midterms (2 x 20%)

Mix of multiple-choice and (very) short answer.

Non-cumulative.

Total= **40%**

Final exam

Mix of multiple-choice and (very) short answer.

Cumulative.

Total= **25%**

Quizzes (6)

About material on week of quiz. Lowest score dropped.

Total= **30%**

Experiment participation/ summaries

Total= **5%**

Readings and other materials:

All readings will be available as PDFs, either linked directly from the course syllabus or available through the course Canvas site. Assigned podcast listening will be linked directly from the course syllabus. All assigned reading (or listening) must be completed *before* the class on which the material is assigned.

While we are remote, quizzes will occur via Canvas. When we are in-person, clickers will be used for in-class quizzes, and for other in-class participation.

Podcasting and slides:

This course will be podcast/ recorded! A PDF of the day's slides will be posted on Canvas immediately before each lecture; the recording will be posted soon after each lecture.

Experiment participation:

In this class you will be required to participate in 3 hours of experiments through the SONA system (<http://ucsd.sona-systems.com/>), worth 5% of your grade. As an alternative, you may write summaries of articles on topics related to the course (from a pre-approved list to be posted on the course website). Each 1-page write-up must include: (a) a brief summary of the main content; and (b) a critical reflection on the findings or research described.

Note: Your first two experimental hours/ summaries are worth **1%** each, and your third hour/ summary is worth **3%**.