

Human Language Processing

Last Updated: Wed, 07/09/2025

Course prefix: PSYC

Course number: 2760

Section: A

CRN (you may add up to five):

91627

Instructor First Name: Anna

Instructor Last Name: Ivanova

Semester: Fall

Academic year: 2025

Course description:

In this class, we will discuss the cognitive and neural mechanisms that allow humans to communicate using language. We will examine how our brains process information about words, sentences, and entire narratives; trace how speech, writing, and sign are converted into thoughts (and vice versa); trace language learning in infants and language impairment in disease; compare language processing in those who speak one language vs. many; and tease out the relationship between language and the rest of cognition.

Course learning outcomes:

- Discuss language processing from a cognitive perspective
- Explain how language fits into the broader landscape of the human mind and brain
- Understand how different scientific methodologies (behavioral experiments, neuroimaging, patient studies, stimulation techniques, and computational models) contribute to our understanding of language in the mind and brain
- Develop/strengthen your ability to critically evaluate empirical evidence, including interpreting scientific plots, stating the main takeaway of a study, and discussing the limits of insights from individual scientific experiments

Required course materials:

Language in Mind: An Introduction to Psycholinguistics by Julie Sedivy (2nd edition).

Grading policy:

1. Weekly quizzes (2% each; 20% total)

Every week, we will do a short in-class quiz covering the main concepts from the previous week. You will be able to drop 1 quiz with the lowest grade.

2. Take-home assignments (10% each; 40% total)

There will be 4 take-home assignments where you will be asked to interact with the models discussed in class & write up a short report.

Group work policy: *you can work on assignments together, but each student must submit an individually written report (no copying or providing the same written responses!). You should also list all members of your team in the report.*

3. Midterm (20%)

The midterm will be in class, open-book format. Use of the internet, notes, etc. is allowed; communicating with other people and using AI tools like ChatGPT is not allowed.

4. Final exam (20%)

The final exam will take place during the final exam period and will be non-cumulative (covering the content discussed after the midterm). It will also be open book. Use of the internet, notes, etc. is allowed; communicating with other people and using AI tools like ChatGPT is not allowed.

5. Extra credit (5%)

We will provide extra credit opportunities throughout the semester for up to 5% of the total grade.

Your end-of-semester letter grade will be determined by your overall points score, as follows:

97-100:	A+	93-96:	A	90-92:
A-				
87-89:	B+	83-86:	B	80-82:
B-				
77-79:	C+	73-76:	C	70-72:
C-				
60-69:	D	below 60:	F	

Attendance policy:

You are expected to attend each lecture in person. If you are sick or have other extenuating circumstances, email the TAs before class and use the Zoom link to attend the class remotely / watch the recording on Canvas if it is available. Lecture recordings are not guaranteed. You are expected to know the content of the lectures; not all of the information we cover is explicitly stated on the slides.

Academic honesty/integrity statement:

Students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. All work submitted must be original and properly cited. Plagiarism, cheating, or any form of academic dishonesty will result in immediate consequences as outlined in the university's academic integrity policy.

Core IMPACTS statement(s) (if applicable):

This is a Core IMPACTS course that is part of the Social Sciences area.

Core IMPACTS refers to the core curriculum, which provides students with essential knowledge in foundational academic areas. This course will help students master course content, and support students' broad academic and career goals.

This course should direct students toward a broad Orienting Question:

- How do I understand human experiences and connections?

Completion of this course should enable students to meet the following Learning Outcome:

- Students will effectively analyze the complexity of human behavior, and how historical, economic, political, social, or geographic relationships develop, persist, or change.

Course content, activities and exercises in this course should help students develop the following Career-Ready Competencies:

- Intercultural Competence
- Perspective-Taking
- Persuasion