

# Syllabus

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## *LING 275Lg: Language and Mind*

Spring 2020

Time MW 10-11:50am  
Place SGM 101  
Website Blackboard

Instructors	Stephanie Shih	Deniz Rudin
Email	<a href="mailto:shihs@usc.edu">shihs@usc.edu</a>	<a href="mailto:drudin@usc.edu">drudin@usc.edu</a>
Office	GFS-301H	GFS-301E
Office Hours	M 2:30–3:30pm	M, T 1–2pm

TAs	Jessica Johnson	Luismi Toquero Perez	Jina Song
Email	<a href="mailto:jessica.m.johnson@usc.edu">jessica.m.johnson@usc.edu</a>	<a href="mailto:toquerop@usc.edu">toquerop@usc.edu</a>	<a href="mailto:jinas@usc.edu">jinas@usc.edu</a>

## Description

This course introduces the study of language as a cognitive science, focusing on the mental representation of speech sounds, words, sentences, and meanings. Some questions that will be addressed throughout the course include the following: What are the building blocks of human language? What principles govern the distribution of sounds and words in the world's languages? Why do sentences mean what they mean, and how can we use them to communicate more than their literal meaning? How (and why) does language use vary across communities and individuals? How is linguistic knowledge stored and accessed in the mind? How do language and technology interact in our contemporary experiences? Throughout, we will examine the kinds of evidence that scientists bring to the study of language in the mind.

The course emphasizes the scientific methods of linguistics and psychology, introducing students to the diverse analytical skills and laboratory techniques used in the scientific study of language. As a cognitive science, the study of language has developed largely in the latter half of the 20th century, and many of the results and methods discussed in the course will be very recent, under 30 years old. As a result, some of the questions explored in this introductory course are not yet fully answered or have only recently been understood, affording students the opportunity to witness how theories evolve through experimentation and argumentation.

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## Practical Syllabus Content

### Requirements

#### Overview

Lab attendance and participation	15% of final grade
Homeworks (6 out of 7)	40%
Midterm exam	20%
Final exam	25%
Extra credit	+1%

#### Specifics

**Lab attendance and participation.** Lab attendance and participation is mandatory. Labs begin the first week of classes. Labs are designed for hands-on practice and application of concepts introduced in lecture. Attendance will be taken at each lab section. Please attend your scheduled section. If, for some reason, you need to attend another section for a given week, please notify your TA in advance. Otherwise, you will be marked absent.

**Homeworks.** There will be 7 homeworks total. These will be due in printed hard copy at the beginning of class on each specified due date, usually a Monday (please see schedule for specifics). The lowest non-zero homework grade will be dropped in calculating final grades. Absolutely no late homeworks will be accepted, except in the case of documented medical emergencies. You are, of course, always welcome to turn in your homework early.

**Exams.** The midterm exam will be given during class on Wednesday, March 4, 2020. The final will be given during the scheduled exam period for the course on Monday, May 11, 2020 at 8am. Both exams will be cumulative.

Exams will cover material from lecture, lab sections, and assigned readings. Absolutely no make-up midterm exam can be given except in the case of documented medical emergencies, or in the case of previously approved adequate and documented reasons (e.g., religious holiday observances). In the latter case, you must inform the instructors in writing two weeks prior to the exam. Per university policy, no rescheduling of the final examination is possible.

**Extra credit.** As part of learning about language as a cognitive science, you may participate in one experiment at the USC Language Processing Lab. Participation will take up to one hour, and students will be able to choose a time that is convenient for them. Participation will take place outside of class time. Credit for experiment participation is based on timely arrival and following the experimenter's instructions. Speakers of English as well as speakers of other languages will be able to participate. *Alternative:* Instead of participating in a language lab experiment, students can opt to instead read an assigned extra credit research article and write a one-page paper proposing a follow-up experiment. These papers will be posted in an extra credit readings folder on Blackboard about mid-way through

the course. Extra credit work must be completed by the end of instruction for the course, May 1. More information to follow.

## Materials

There is no textbook required for the course. Readings will be posted on Blackboard. These will be announced in class and via Blackboard.

## Email policy

For communication about *basic administrative issues*, the most efficient method to reach the instructors and TAs is usually by email. Please allow at least 24 hours for a response via email during the week and 36 hours during the weekend.

For questions about *course material*, we prefer to meet with you in person. Talking with you in person helps us to answer your questions more thoroughly and to engage with you actively in course material. You are encouraged to visit the office hours of any of the professors or TAs. Office hour times are listed above. If our scheduled times do not work for you, we are also available to meet with you by appointment: just send us an email to schedule one.

## Laptops in classroom policy

Laptops are permitted only in the last rows of the classroom and must only be used for legitimate classroom purposes (e.g., note-taking, referencing course-relevant materials). Tablets are likewise permitted only for legitimate classroom purposes. All other electronic devices must be on “silent” and stowed away for the duration of the class. Electronic distractions in class are not respectful to your fellow students or instructors: these distractions will not be tolerated, and you will be asked to leave.

## Academic Integrity

Academic misconduct is a serious matter, with serious consequences for violations of the academic integrity policies. All students must abide by the USC Student Conduct Code & Policies. Any work submitted by a student must be the student’s own work. Working together for take-home assignments (e.g., discussing readings, project ideas) is allowed, but all individuals and the nature and extent of their contributions must be acknowledged in writing on individual assignments. All sources (published or unpublished alike) utilized in preparing an assignment must be appropriately cited. Plagiarism, cheating, and any form of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. All violations will result in at least a zero for the assignment and will be reported to the university for further disciplinary action. Serious offenses will result in a failing grade for the course. For more information on academic integrity for graduate students, see [http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/student-conduct/grad\\_ai.htm](http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/student-conduct/grad_ai.htm).

## Conduct

Harassment, sexual misconduct, interpersonal violence, and stalking are not tolerated by the university. All faculty and most staff are considered Responsible Employees by the university and must forward all information they receive about these types of situations to the university’s Title IX Coordinator. The Title IX Coordinator is responsible for assisting students with supportive accommodations, including academic accommodations, as well as investigating these incidents if the reporting student requests an investigation. If you need academic accommodations, you may contact

the Title IX Coordinator directly ([titleix@usc.edu](mailto:titleix@usc.edu), 213-821-8290) without sharing any personal information with the course instructor. If you would like to speak with a confidential counselor, Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) provides 24/7 confidential support for students (213-740-4900; press 0 after hours).

### Students with disabilities

Students requesting academic accommodations based on a disability are required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. Information can be found at [http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home\\_index.html](http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html). A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP when adequate documentation is filed. Please be sure the letter is delivered to the instructor as early in the semester as possible. The DSP office is in GFS 120 and their phone number is 213-740-0776.

### Course outline

Schedule may be adjusted; any adjustments will be announced in class and via Blackboard announcements.

Week	Date	Topics and Readings	Due
1	1/13	Introduction: Language & the Mind	
	1/15	Articulatory phonetics	
2	1/20	<i>MLK holiday - No class</i>	
	1/22		
3	1/27	From sounds to mental representations	<b>Homework #1</b>
	1/29	Sound patterns in the mind	
4	2/3		
	2/5		
5	2/10	Cognitive building blocks of words	<b>Homework #2</b>
	2/12		
6	2/17	The structure of sentences	
	2/19		
7	2/24	Semantics	<b>Homework #3</b>
	2/26	Inferences beyond literal meaning	
8	3/2	Social cognition in meaning	
	3/4	<b>**Midterm Exam**</b>	
9	3/9	Language Variation & Change	<b>Homework #4</b>
	3/11		

10	3/16, 18	<i>Spring break - No classes</i>	
11	3/23		
	3/25		
12	3/30	Language Acquisition	<b>Homework #5</b>
	4/1		
13	4/6	Cognitive linguistics	
	4/8		
14	4/13	Psycholinguistics and neurolinguistics	<b>Homework #6</b>
	4/15		
15	4/20	Language & Technology	
	4/22		
16	4/27	Final review	<b>Homework #7</b>
	4/29		
FW	5/11	<b>**Final Exam**</b>	8-10am