Introduction to the Course

This course will introduce you to major theories and topics in the field of language development with a focus on language as a social and cultural phenomenon. We will explore the relationship between language and social cognition, consider evolutionary and comparative work in the field, as well as interdisciplinary work on language as a social and cultural phenomenon. Another important contrast we will highlight is between approaches that consider language to a) differentially reflect developmental accomplishments in various social and cognitive developmental domains or to b) provide a platform from which these accomplishments are said to emerge. Throughout the semester, you will have ongoing opportunities to read, discuss, and critically evaluate works in child language development and to discuss and analyze the application of these works to the everyday contexts within which children develop.

Student Learning Outcomes

- Critically evaluate research in child language development through active reading and class discussion of primary source readings
- Explicate theoretical tensions in the field through weekly written “squibs”
- Expand on theoretical positions and empirical findings and apply these to everyday contexts within which children develop through a final research paper

Design of the course

Seminar: Each week, class time will be devoted to probing and discussing the details of the readings for that week. Pairs of students will be assigned the responsibility of leading class discussions on particular readings. Some weeks will include in-class debates in which small groups of students take a position and argue it with one another.

Readings: All readings are to be completed before the class during which we will discuss or debate them so that you will be able to fully participate in the class. If you do not feel that you have completely understood everything you have read, your participation in class should focus on asking questions and helping your fellow students to clarify key points. In this way, your (individual and collective, i.e. as a class) understanding of what you read will sharpen over the semester.
**Weekly writing assignments:** Every other week, each student will prepare a squib (a summary plus commentary that is designed to promote discussion of the readings for that week). Students will be divided into two groups that will alternate writing the squibs each week. The first 4 squibs (weeks 2-5, worth 35 points) will cover one of the weekly readings. For weeks 6 – 9, you will prepare a squib relating two of the readings (worth 40 points), and for weeks 10 – 13, you will write a squib comparing 3 of the weekly readings (worth 45 points). I will give you some guidelines to use when preparing your squibs. I ask that you post these to Bb in the discussion board prepared for this purpose no later than noon on Monday each week so that I and your classmates can have a chance to review each other’s’ thoughts on the readings before coming to class. Please turn in a final, well-edited hard copy on Thursday in class. Late papers can be turned it at any time before the end of the semester for half credit. On May 10 (final exam day), there will be an in-class debate (worth 40 points) which will require some written preparation beforehand. Details will be given closer to the time of the assignment.

**Final paper:** In your final paper (around 6-8 pages, due on or before the last day of class) you should synthesize material from one section of the course (either the section on Cognitive Foundations, Social Cognitive Development, or Social and Cultural Approaches). Alternatively, you could compare/contrast the material from two sections if you feel up to it. Either way, I encourage you to build from your weekly squibs in preparing your final paper. Each student is required to have at least one “planning meeting” with me prior to beginning writing, and will also submit a draft at least one week prior to the due date. Readings from the “additional suggested readings” list should be used to supplement class readings. More detailed instructions will be given in class.

**Participation:** The participation grade includes participation in class discussions, class debates, weekly Blackboard posts (including squibs) and Blackboard discussion forums. **Consistent and informed participation is expected of all students.** This means that not only should you meaningfully contribute to class discussions, but that your comments, questions and contributions should show that you have carefully read and reflected on the assigned material so that you are prepared for class meetings.

Getting help outside of class. I encourage you to meet with me at any time that you feel stuck or have questions or just want some feedback. In my experience, students who do this do significantly better in my courses. I am willing to answer virtually any question pertaining to the course. **I want you to succeed in this class** and will try to help you in any way I can. Second, I encourage you to form study groups or have online discussions to help you compare your understanding of complicated concepts. Third, I strongly encourage you to make use of the writing center. The folks there are trained to help you with all kinds of different writing forms, and are great resources for helping with organization and style (you will be entirely responsible for the content), and they are terrific at helping you polish your thinking through writing. Check the schedule online [http://critical.tamucc.edu/wiki/WC/Home](http://critical.tamucc.edu/wiki/WC/Home) or email for an appointment at [Writing-Center@tamucc.edu](mailto:Writing-Center@tamucc.edu).

Blackboard. We will use Blackboard for posting important class documents including the syllabus, some readings, specific instructions for the various writing assignments, announcements, student squibs, etc. You are also welcome and encouraged to contribute to the discussion boards as another form of participation in the course.

**Attendance:** Students are expected to attend all classes. I will not take attendance, though your consistent and informed participation (impossible if you are absent!) is an important part of your final
grade. In-class writing assignments may be given and will constitute part of the participation grade. If you miss a class, you will need to arrange to get notes and other information (e.g. announcements) from a fellow student. Students who are absent may not make up in-class assignments for attendance credit.

**Final grades:** Your final grade will be calculated based on:

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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>120 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>Squibs</td>
<td>240 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Debate</td>
<td>40 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final paper</td>
<td>100 points</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>FINAL COURSE GRADE</strong></td>
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| 90-100% (450 – 500 pts.)     | A indicates work of distinction, of exceptionally high quality |
| 80-89% (400 – 449 pts.)      | B indicates good work, but not of distinction |
| 70-79% - (350 – 399 pts.)    | C indicates average work and satisfaction of University degree requirements |
| 60-69% (300 – 349 pts.)      | D indicates marginal work |
| Below 60% (below 300 pts.)  | F indicates unacceptable work |

**ACADEMIC HONESTY**

As a member of the professional community here at TAMUCC, I expect you to fulfill your academic obligations through honest and independent effort. In a community of scholars committed to truth, honesty in our academic efforts supports the code of ethics by which we live and is considered the standard by which all students and faculty are held accountable. Dishonesty in academic work is grounds for being dropped from the course with a failing grade. Don’t hesitate to ask me if you have questions about what is right and what is wrong.

Make sure you are familiar with all the information on TAMUCC’s Academic Honesty Policy at [http://www.tamucc.edu/catalog/archives/Catalog03/Undergraduate/generali/general.html](http://www.tamucc.edu/catalog/archives/Catalog03/Undergraduate/generali/general.html) and if you have any questions or are unclear about anything, by all means please talk with me or contact someone at the Tutoring and Learning center [http://falcon.tamucc.edu/~tlcweb/si.htm](http://falcon.tamucc.edu/~tlcweb/si.htm) before engaging in any questionable behavior. We will make use of APA style for all citations, references, etc. so I encourage you familiarize yourself with how this is done (check here [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/workshops/hypertext/apa/introduction.html](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/workshops/hypertext/apa/introduction.html) for a nice summary and introduction to using APA style in your writing).

**ACADEMIC ADVISING**

The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. Degree plans are prepared in the CLA Academic Advising Center. The University uses an online Degree Audit system. Any amendment must be approved by the Department Chair and the Office of the Dean. All courses and requirements specified in the final degree plan audit must be completed before a degree will be granted. The CLA Academic Advising Office is located in Driftwood #203. For more information please call 361-825-3466.
DISABILITY SERVICES
The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Corpus Christi Hall, Room #116.

If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance at (361) 825-5816.

GRADE APPEALS PROCESS
Students who feel that they have not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in this class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, cla.tamucc.edu/students/studentinfo.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean’s Office.
Tentative Course Outline

SECTION I, INTRODUCTION: NATIVIST VS. NON-NATIVIST APPROACHES

First class (January 21): Introduction to the course

Week 1 (Jan 26, 28): Is language an instinct?
⇒ Readings:

Week 2 (Feb 2, 4): Cognitive vs. functionalist approaches
⇒ Readings:

Additional suggested readings:

SECTION II: COGNITIVE FOUNDATIONS

Week 3 (Feb 9,11): Perspective-taking
⇒ Readings:
Week 4 (Feb 16, 18): Theory of Mind and Language

⇒ Readings:

Additional suggested readings:

**SECTION III: SOCIAL COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT**

Week 5 (Feb 23, 25): Social Cognition

⇒ Readings:

Week 6 (March 1, 3): Pointing

⇒ Readings:
Week 7 (March 8, 10): Joint attention

⇒ Readings:

SPRING BREAK!! No classes March 15 or 17

Week 8 (March 22, 24): Evolutionary and comparative perspectives

⇒ Readings:

Additional suggested readings:
SECTION IV: SOCIAL AND CULTURAL APPROACHES

Week 9 (March 29, 31): Language and Social Interaction
⇒ Readings:

Week 10 (April 5, 7): Culture and cognitive development
⇒ Readings:

Week 11 (April 12, 14): Language Socialization
⇒ Readings:

Week 12 (April 19, 21): Grammar and interaction
⇒ Readings:

Week 13 (April 26, 28): Language and Self
⇒ Readings:

Additional suggested readings:

Week 14 (May 3):
⇒ Final Course Paper due

FINAL EXAM (May 10)
⇒ Debates