

Department: Linguistics

Course No: 101

Credits: 3

Title: Language and Mind

Contact: Harry van der Hulst

Content Area: CA1-Arts and Humanities

Catalog Copy: 101. Language and Mind. Either semester. Three credits. Three hours; Two one-hour lectures and one one-hour discussion section. Departmental staff. The special properties of the human mind that make verbal communication possible. Basic topics in the psychology of language.

Course Information: The capacity for language is a central characteristic of the human mind. But what exactly do we "know" when we know our native language? And how exactly did we come to know it? Such questions have captivated some of the greatest minds in history, from Plato, Descartes and Leibniz to Russell, Wittgenstein and Chomsky. Language and Mind reviews the relevant scientific evidence, introduces leading ideas from contemporary linguistics and philosophy, and helps students develop the reasoning skills needed to assess competing proposals. There are three exams (format: multiple choice questions). Reading consists of textbook chapters. Students are required to participate in in-class exercises during weekly discussion sections. Topics/themes: Nature/nurture, Innateness, animal communication, the structure of language, language acquisition, localization in the brain, language disorders, sign language, pidgin and creoles.

Meets Goals of Gen Ed: Language and Mind meets at least three of the goals of general education: 2. Students acquire intellectual breadth by considering the human mind and the place of language within it. 3. They acquire critical judgment skills, by evaluating and discussing some of the most important controversies in intellectual history. 7. They acquire a working understanding of a major process by which we are now gaining new knowledge: They learn how linguists and cognitive psychologists are using scientific hypothesis-testing to gain new insights into language and mind.

CA1 Criteria: Criterion 2. The course engages students in central philosophical (e.g. epistemological) inquiries into the precise nature of linguistic knowledge, the origins of that knowledge, and the place of language within human cognition. Language is examined for the insight it provides into what it means to be human.

Role of Grad Students: Graduate students lead the weekly discussion sections and help with course administration.