Course Description
This course is designed to introduce students to early language and literacy development from a developmental science perspective. My goal is to familiarize you with how language development is studied and why it is important to study. We will focus on cognitive mechanisms of learning and connect the study of language to the study of development more generally.

Course Components
Weekly Participation 30%
Leading Discussion [2x] 20%
Midterm Assignment 15%
Final Paper & Presentation 35%

Participation
I expect everyone to participate every week. My goal is to foster a culture of free intellectual exchange and exploration. If you have difficulty talking in class, please meet with me as soon as possible so that we can discuss strategies. Each class will be a mixture of me “lecturing” and general discussion, for which strong preparation (a thorough and critical reading of all the papers) will be required. You should come prepared to class with at least 2 questions/comments/ideas to share each week.

In-class discussion leaders
Each week one student will serve as the discussion leader. Your goal in this role is to facilitate the class discussion about the articles we have read and related topics. The discussion leader should 1) briefly summarize the main points of the articles (working under the assumption that everyone has read them and given them some thought already). You are not expected to bring in additional sources, though if you come across something you want to include you are welcome to; 2) make connections to readings/topics in other weeks as appropriate; 3) pose questions to the class and help direct the flow of the conversation. Putting together slides or handouts is NOT required, though you may if you wish (for example, if there are figures or tables from the papers
you want to highlight, or if you want to lay out a visual representation of a theoretical model or sequence of findings). Please do not make slides that include bulleted lists of points, as these tend to squelch rather than facilitate discussion.

**Things to consider while reading**
(whether you are leading the discussion or not)

- What is the main idea or big-picture take-away from the article? How would you explain it to your grandmother?
- What is the hypothesis? Why is that the hypothesis?
- Does the method adequately test the hypothesis? Are there alternative explanations for the findings? How would you tease those apart?
- What other kinds of evidence would be nice/necessary to fully support the argument? (e.g., a corpus analysis to complement an experiment; a computational model to articulate a theory; an experiment that could investigate causation)
- What is the next/another experiment to do to follow-up on these findings?
- In what ways do the assigned papers relate to one another? How do the studies/approaches/hypotheses relate to the theories we’ve discussed or to topics we’ve covered in other weeks?

**Midterm Assignment**
The midterm assignment will be an at-home written exercise, answering no more than 2 questions with around 500-1000 words each.

**Final Project: Paper & Presentation**
The final project is a proposal (in both oral presentation and written form) for an empirical study of language and/or literacy development. The project should directly engage the course material by critiquing and/or elaborating on one of the papers read for class. Any topic covered in class is acceptable, and any form of study is acceptable (e.g., experiment, corpus analysis, computational model). You are not required to do extra reading, but you may bring in additional sources if you wish. You should not spend significant time summarizing any papers included in the course, but any additional sources should be summarized (as I may not be familiar with them!). Your hypothesis must be clear, as must the way in which it relates to the focal paper. While you do not need to fully describe every detail of your proposed method, you must make it clear how you will test your hypothesis (e.g., provide multiple examples of stimuli, a justification for a particular participant sample, a justification for the type of computational model, etc.). You should also consider how you will interpret your results (i.e., what types of alternative explanations might be possible and what would they imply).

**Presentation:** All students will give a presentation during the final class session that covers their proposed study. Presentations will be approximately 15 minutes long with an additional 5 minutes for discussion. Extensive PowerPoints are not required, but you should think carefully about what kind of visual material will help your classmates (and me) follow your reasoning.

**Paper:** The paper describing your proposed research should be no more than 2000 words. You may include figures as necessary. All citations should adhere to APA format. You are encouraged to incorporate the feedback from the class discussion of your project into your paper as appropriate.
No extensions will be granted for the paper or presentation (other than those adhering to the university policy for excused absences). It is possible to turn in the paper and do the presentation early if you anticipate a conflict with the dates provided in the syllabus.

**University Policies**

Please refer to the university policies website for all course related university policies.

http://www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html

All students are expected to be familiar with these policies, including that on plagiarism and academic integrity.
**Overview of Course Content**

*Exact dates of each topic subject to change based on class interest.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Discussion Leader</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>29-Aug</td>
<td>Introduction to Language</td>
<td>Alexa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2*</td>
<td>12-Sep</td>
<td>Theories of development and language acquisition</td>
<td>Alexa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>19-Sep</td>
<td>Input to infants and early speech processing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>26-Sep</td>
<td>Recognizing words in fluent speech</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>3-Oct</td>
<td>Linking words to referents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>10-Oct</td>
<td>Basic Syntax: Sequence learning &amp; lexical categories</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>17-Oct</td>
<td>Syntactic structure and what is learned/learnable</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>24-Oct</td>
<td>Midterm synthesis [midterm assignment due 8am 10/27]</td>
<td>Alexa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>31-Oct</td>
<td>Predicting variation in language acquisition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>7-Nov</td>
<td>Group differences in language acquisition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>14-Nov</td>
<td>Foundations of Literacy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>21-Nov</td>
<td>Models for reading</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>1-page proposal for final project due</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>28-Nov</td>
<td>Variation in reading outcomes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>5-Dec</td>
<td>End of semester synthesis</td>
<td>Alexa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Peer feedback on proposals due by end of day</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>12-Dec</td>
<td>Presentations</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-Dec</td>
<td></td>
<td>Final paper due by 8:00am to Canvas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Readings by Week

The reading list may be revised as the course goes along. All readings will be made available on Elms.

WEEK 1: Organizational issues and background

WEEK 2: Theories of development and language acquisition

CHAPTER 5 “Developing an Instinct”

WEEK 3: Input to infants and early speech processing

WEEK 4: Recognizing words in fluent speech

WEEK 5: Linking words to meanings


**WEEK 6: Basic syntax: sequence learning & lexical categories**


*responses to Marcus et al. (don’t need to read all of them exhaustively – get the main idea or focus on what most interests you)*


**WEEK 7: Syntactic structure: what is learned and what is learnable**


*responses to Lidz et al. (don’t need to read all of them exhaustively – get the main idea or focus on what most interests you)*


Chang, Dell & Bock (2006) Becoming Syntactic

**WEEK 8: MIDTERM SYNTHESIS**

Reading TBD

Midterm assignment due on/before Thursday morning

**WEEK 9: Predicting variation in language acquisition**


WEEK 10: Group differences in language acquisition


WEEK 11: Foundations of literacy
Snow, C., Burns, S., & Griffin, P. (Eds.) Preventing reading difficulties in young children. Chapter 2 (pp 41-83).


WEEK 12: Models for reading

WEEK 13: Variation in reading outcomes
Snow, C., Burns, S., & Griffin, P. (Eds.) Preventing reading difficulties in young children. Chapters 3-4 (pp 87-133).


**WEEK 14: End of semester synthesis**
Reading TBD

**WEEK 15: Project Presentations**
No reading