Course description and objectives

Language and literacy acquisition is one of the most important components of our educational system. This course is designed to introduce you to the theoretical and empirical research on cognitive and linguistic processes involved in language and literacy development. Focus is on how language contributes to learning to read from preschool through middle childhood. Reading materials will be a combination of empirical research articles and review papers. Students are expected to develop knowledge about the key literature in the selected topics (see the Outline of Topics section). Students are encouraged to use the assignments to explore their own research projects, and Dr. Wang will work closely with the students on the final papers to ensure a strong final product.

Course format

This course will be taught in a seminar/discussion format. For each week, you will be expected to read two target readings on a specific topic of language and literacy. All of you will be asked to bring into class one thought question concerning the readings. The thought questions have to be related to the key components in the particular reading, for example, the research questions, theoretical framework, experiment/test materials and procedures, statistical analyses or interpretations of the findings. The length of your question should be between 200-350 words. Your questions are essential to facilitate the class discussions led by Dr. Wang and discussion leaders.

Requirements and evaluation

1) Class participation and thought questions (20%): You are required to submit one thought question about the target readings for that class. Please email your thought questions to both the discussant leader and me at least 24 hours before class (by 4pm on Wednesdays but the earlier the better) so that the discussion leader can have time to integrate your questions/comments into the discussion.

You can address concerns/questions you may have about the major points in the readings, how the materials relate to other materials that you know, criticism of the readings, or you can discuss future directions for research. A general question such as “What will be the teaching/educational implications….?” is not encouraged.

2) Leading discussion (20%): In the first class, we will discuss and assign you the topics from the course outline. You will then be responsible for developing an in-depth knowledge of the topics. You will be asked to work together with me in leading the discussion on the topics for the class. For each discussion, you may first spend about 10-15 minutes to summarize the major points of the readings to refresh and warm-up everyone about the key issues before starting the discussion. Short handouts (2-3 pages) will be a good way to help the whole class participate in the discussion. Power point presentation is encouraged.

3) Class presentation (30%): Your presentation will be a literature review of a specific topic of your interest that you have been working on throughout the course. This should include defining key concepts, highlighting research-based principles, reviewing the research evidence for
these principles and pointing out limitations and future research directions. The entire presentation will be about 30 minutes.

Each student will meet with Dr. Wang individually in advance to consult her about the selection of the topic and the key literature to be reviewed. Each student will present their ideas for the review on April 5th.

4) Final research paper (30%): You are required to submit a short final paper which is based on your literature review. You are required to review critical issues on the specific topic. The length should be about 12 pages (typed, double-spaced, 12-font size). Please consult the APA (American Psychological Association) Publication Manual for writing format.

Option and encouraged: Research proposal. You can further develop your research ideas on the specific topic you are interested in. The proposal should include introduction of the research questions and relevant literature review; description of method and discussion of potential outcomes.

Major journals that publish research on language and literacy development

- Applied Psycholinguistics
- Behavioral and Brain Sciences
- Brain and Language
- Child Development
- Cognition
- Developmental Psychology
- Developmental Science
- Journal of Child Language
- Journal of Educational Psychology
- Journal of Experimental Child Psychology
- Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition
- Journal of Memory and Language
- Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research
- Language learning
- Language, Cognition and Neuroscience
- Memory and Cognition
- Psychological Review
- Psychological Science
- Reading and writing: An interdisciplinary journal
- Reading Research Quarterly
- Scientific Studies of Reading

Literature on language and literacy can be searched through PsychINFO on UMD library website. Most of the journals are currently on-line via E-journals on the same website.
Outline of Topics

January 25: Course organization/Introduction

February 1: Phonological Awareness and Reading


Additional:


February 8 Morphological Awareness and Reading


Additional:


February 15 Reading Development I


Additional:


**Feb 22**

**Reading Development II**


Additional:


**March 1**

**Orthographic/Spelling Development I**


Additional:


**March 8**

**Orthographic Spelling Development II**


Additional:


**March 15**

**Reading Comprehension**


Additional:


**March 22**

**Spring Break**

**March 29**

**Learning to Read in a Second Language**


Additional:


**April 5**

**Reading Difficulties**


April 12  
**AERA Conference in NY**

April 19  
**Discussion of Literature Review Topics and Ideas**

April 26  
**Reading Instruction**


Additional:


May 3  
**Meet with Dr. Wang for Preparation of Presentations**

May 10  
**Final Presentations**

TBA  
**Final Paper due to Dr. Wang’s mailbox**