Synopsis:
This course is an introduction to language disorders throughout the lifespan. Its main goal is to elucidate the nature of the human faculty of language through the prism of genetic and acquired deficits. The emphasis is on theory, not clinical applications, although some issues of treatment, as well as larger social relevance will be briefly discussed. Mostly, the focus will be on the implications of atypical language for linguistic science, cognitive psychology and neuroscience.

The course is structured as follows: (i) A series of introductory lectures covers fundamental issues in the cognitive neuroscience of language, such as the biological basis of language, its relation to other cognitive capacities, its neural organization, and the methods for studying language in the brain. (ii) The second part of the course examines language loss in acquired neurological disorders, followed by an overview of language deficits caused by neurodegenerative diseases. (iii) The effects of sensory deprivation and neurodevelopmental disorders on language acquisition are studied next. (iv) In the final part of the course, students present projects on topics of their choice, pertaining to atypical language.

Requirements:

• Midterm Exams
There will be 2 in-class midterm exams, given on October 6 and November 12. The exams will include language samples for analysis, problem sets and questions based on the content of the readings and the discussions in class. The second exam will test material studied after the first, i.e., it will not be cumulative. If you have to be absent on the day of the exams (very good reasons only!), let me know well in advance, so that we can arrange for an alternate date.
• **Research Project**
You need to complete a research project on a topic pertaining to atypical language. The write-up will be due on December 15 by 10am (the scheduled time for an in-class final). Late submissions will be marked down by 10% for each day after the deadline, and will **not** be accepted after 10am on December 17. The project should be done independently and should be submitted electronically, through Blackboard. A critical review of the literature, an original analysis of language data, or a well-motivated proposal for an experiment are all possible options for your project. You should discuss with me your ideas by the end of October. There is no length requirement for the paper; about 8-10 single-spaced pages is reasonable.

• **Class Presentation**
In the last part of the course, you will give a class presentation of your project. Plan to speak for 20 minutes, and prepare a handout or slides to help guide your audience.

• **Quizzes**
There will be frequent quizzes based on the assigned papers, lecture notes, and discussions. If you’ve done the readings and paid attention in class, you’ll have no problem completing the quizzes correctly.

• **Class attendance and participation**
You are expected to attend every class, unless some special circumstance arises, in which case you should let me know ASAP, ideally in advance. Attendance will be recorded. If you are absent **without a valid excuse** on the day of a quiz or an exam, you will receive 0. You should complete the assigned readings on time and comment on them in class, ask and answer questions, suggest ideas – i.e., participate actively.

**Grading:**
- Midterm Exam 1: 20%
- Midterm Exam 2: 20%
- Class Presentation: 15%
- Final Project: 25%
- Quizzes: 20%

**Readings:**
There is no textbook for this course. Readings are general overview chapters or research articles, selected from the books listed below, or from journals, as referenced on the schedule. Some of the readings are available electronically, either through USC’s library or on Blackboard. A master copy of the remaining readings is available on reserve at the Linguistics Department (301 GFS, 740-2986).


**Academic Integrity:** You are expected to adhere to the principles of academic integrity. Any work submitted and ideas expressed need to be your own. If you use someone else’s idea, this needs to be explicitly acknowledged. Quizzes and exams are to be done independently. You may discuss your final project with others but you need to write it up yourself. Any violation of academic integrity will be reported to the office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards. Please consult The Undergraduate Guide for Avoiding Plagiarism at: http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/forms/tig.pdf

**Students with Disabilities:** Students requesting academic accommodations based on a disability are required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me early in the semester. DSP is located in STU 301; (213) 740-0776. http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html
Course Outline:

The schedule of topics and readings may undergo changes, which will be announced in class.

Part I: Fundamental Issues in the Cognitive Neuroscience of Language

8/25 Overview of the Course

8/27 Language as a Cognitive Faculty
Reading:
- Anderson and Lightfoot 2002. “Studying the Human Language Faculty” in A&L, chapter 1, pp. 1-17. [Electronic access at USC library]
- Anderson and Lightfoot 2002. “Language as a Mental Organ” in A&L, chapter 2, pp. 18-40. [Electronic access at USC library]

9/1 Goals and Methods of Cognitive Neuroscience. Overview of Brain Structure and Cognitive Function
Reading:

9/3 The Biological Bases of Language
Reading:
Part II: Language Loss in Acquired and Neurodegenerative Disorders

9/8  Overview of Aphasia Syndromes

Reading:

9/10  Broca’s and Wernicke’s Aphasia

Reading:
• Kearns 2005 “Broca’s Aphasia” in LP, chapter 8, 117-141
• Caspari 2005 “Wernicke’s Aphasia” in LP, chapter 9, 142-154

9/15  Syntactic Deficits in Aphasia

Reading:

9/17  Lexical Deficits in Aphasia

Reading:

9/22  Phonological Deficits in Aphasia

Reading:

9/24  Sign Language Aphasia

Reading:
### 9/29 Acquired Dyslexia and Agraphia

**Reading:**

### 10/1 Alzheimer’s Disease and Other Neurodegenerative Disorders

**Reading:**

### 10/6 In-class Midterm Exam 1

### 10/8 Synthesis

### Part III: Atypical Language Acquisition

### 10/13 Overview of Atypical Language Acquisition.

**Reading:**

### 10/15 Specific Language Impairment – General Characterization

**Reading:**

### 10/20 & 10/22 Deficits of Grammar in Specific Language Impairment

**Reading:**
10/27 & 10/29  **Williams Syndrome**  
**Reading:**  

11/3  **Autism and Down Syndrome**  
**Reading:**  

11/5  **The Impact of Sensory Deficits on Language Acquisition**  
**Reading:**  

11/10  **Developmental Dyslexia and Agraphia**  
**Reading:**  

11/12  **In-class Midterm Exam 2**

11/17  **Conclusions**

**Part IV: Project Presentations**

11/19 & 11/24  **Student Presentations**

11/26  **No class - Thanksgiving**

12/1 & 12/3  **Student Presentations**

12/15  **Research project due by 10am, on Blackboard**