

PSYC 4700 A : MEANING IN LANGUAGE - HOW WE PROCESS THE MEANING OF WORDS

Instructor	Dr. David Sidhu
Term	Fall
Course Delivery	In Person
Email Address	david.sidhu@carleton.ca
Office Location	Loeb A826
Office Hours	By Appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION/INSTRUCTOR'S STATEMENT

The ability to effortlessly convert symbols on a page into sound and meaning is one of the most incredible aspects of human cognition. One need only look at the script of an unfamiliar language to be reminded how impressive this ability is.

In this course we will look at how we turn words into meaning, and the different factors that contribute. We will focus on the research examining aspects of word meaning that affect how words are processed. For example:

- Why are words for larger things easier to process?
- Why does reading a word like “jump” activate the motor cortex and how does that affect its processing?
- How do we process words like “squeak” or “chirp” that are both words and sounds?

We will also look at some more esoteric questions like:

- How are emojis processed?
- What do LLMs have to tell us about word processing?

We will discuss journal articles that students take turns presenting.

The course will also involve hands on data analysis using existing mega study databases. Students will use these to develop and test novel questions. They will get the chance to propose new aspects of word meaning that have not been studied and will get to examine whether these provide new insights into word processing.

EVALUATION (SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

Evaluation will include class participation, written assignments, in class presentations, leading class discussions, and hands on data analysis.

TEXT

A set of peer-reviewed journal articles, digital copies of which will be available for free through the Carleton University library and/or Brightspace.