The Origins of Language

In this course, we will read and discuss Michael Arbib’s book *How the Brain Got Language* (2012). The book provides an introduction to the large and contentious series of topics that dominate discussions of language evolution, including studies of non-human animals, the neuroscience of language, gestural vs. vocal models, signed vs. spoken language, and cultural theories of how languages evolve.

The course will cover one chapter per week.

1. Jan 5  Chapter 1: Introduction
2. Jan 12 Chapter 2: Perspectives on Human Languages
3. Jan 19 Chapter 3: Vocalization and Gesture in Monkey and Ape
4. Jan 26 Chapter 4: Human Brain, Monkey Brain, and Praxis
5. Feb 2  Chapter 5: Mirror Neurons and Mirror Systems
6. Feb 9  Chapter 6: A Summary of the Book’s Theory
7. Feb 16 Chapter 7: Simple and Complex Imitation

*READING WEEK: NO CLASS FEB 23*

8. March 2  Chapter 8: Via Pantomime to Protosign
10. March 16 Chapter 10: How Languages Got Started
12. March 30 Chapter 12: How Languages Emerge

**Reading**

Presentation

Students will lead the discussion of one chapter.

Term paper

Students will be asked to write a 10-15 page (double-spaced) term paper the topic of their chapter presentation. This will be due 3 weeks after the date of the presentation. The reference section should be as comprehensive as possible.

Assessment

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<tr>
<td>Participation/preparedness in class</td>
<td>50%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Term paper</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
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