

## **PSYCH 741: Advanced Topics in PNB**

### **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
- (9) March 9 Chapter 9: Protosign and Protospeech: An Expanding Spiral
- (10) March 16 Chapter 10: How Languages Got Started
- (11) March 23 Chapter 11: How the Child Acquires Language
- (12) March 30 Chapter 12: How Languages Emerge

#### Reading

Arbib, M. A. (2012). *How the brain got language: The mirror system hypothesis*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

### 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

Participation/preparedness in class	50%
Term paper	30%
Presentation	20%