Course description
This course provides an introduction to theory and research in second language acquisition (SLA) and explores the relevance of SLA research for second language learning and teaching in a variety of contexts. A range of theoretical perspectives underlying previous and current SLA research will be examined, as well as a range of empirical classroom studies investigating the role of form-focused instruction and corrective feedback in classroom L2 learning. A range of individual differences, including age, aptitude, motivation and anxiety will be examined to consider why some L2 learners are more successful than others.

Course objectives
After this course, successful students will be able to:
- explain the key constructs that inform the study of L2 acquisition
- develop good understanding of the important role of interaction in L2 learning
- accurately evaluate popular ideas about language acquisition
- develop informed expectations for language teaching and learning
- answer their own questions about SLA and frame new questions in the light of current research

Required text:

All other required readings are made available on Blackboard.

The following texts are recommended for further readings for any SLA topics you might be interested in:

A list of books, book chapters and journal articles recommended for additional background reading are posted on Blackboard.
Course requirements and grade evaluation:
1. Attendance and class discussion participation: 20 points
2. Article presentation and discussion: 10 points
3. Midterm paper: 30 points
4. Final paper: 30 points
5. Final paper presentation: 10 points

Class attendance and participation
Please note that part of your grade will be based on class participation and attendance - if you miss more than four classes, you will not be able to pass this course. Also the final paper class presentations are considered the most important part of your participation, thus your absence from this will result in a half grade reduction. See page 6 for the academic policies.

Article presentation and discussion
Each student will sign up for an article presentation. The articles will be closely related to the topics discussed that day in class, and each presentation involves a critical analysis of an empirical study. The presenter should provide the rest of the class with a well-organized, concise, and easy-to-follow handout, highlighting the major points of the presentation and providing a citation of the article(s) presented.

In your presentation, be sure to provide an overview situating its research question(s) within the context of previous research on the topic. Briefly explain the methodology, summarize the results, and critically discuss the findings. The presenter should also discuss the implications in relation to the other readings and theories discussed in class.

At the end of the presentation, include 2-3 discussion questions which your audience can discuss in pairs or small groups. Please try to determine the most important aspects of the research/debate and be selective about what you share with the class so that you can stay within a time limit of 15 minutes for the presentation, 10 minutes for the small-group discussions, and 5 minutes for debriefing/Q&A afterwards.

A list of articles will be posted on Blackboard on the second week and article presentation schedule will be arranged during the 1/20 session. These articles to be presented are pre-class required reading.

Midterm paper: Analysis of a second language learner
For this assignment, you will interview an adult L2 learner, using a structured interview that you will design and implement. A structured interview can be thought of as an oral questionnaire; you ask questions which have been formulated in advance. This is different from an open-ended interview where the interviewer begins with a general idea about what topics to discuss but allows the discourse to go off into any direction worth pursuing. You may work together with others on devising the questionnaire.
You will need to prepare a set of at least 25 questions that will provide information concerning the factors involved in your participant’s language learning experiences. Design some questions in such a way as to infer certain characteristics. Rather than only asking the learner directly to describe his or her aptitude, attitudes, motivation, personality or learning style, ask some questions which allow you (the researcher) to confirm these characteristics through inference.

Write up a report of your results using the following format:
1. Brief introduction stating the purpose of your report and describing the data collection procedures (describe where/when/how the interview took place)-1page
2. Description of the participant’s L2 learning history and the linguistic environment-2 pages
3. Description of the relevant personal characteristics that influenced the participant’s success (or lack of success) in learning other languages-2pages
4. Discussion and conclusion-3pages
   ---Identify the most important factors (internal and/or external) in determining your participant’s success or failure in acquiring the L2. Make connections between the results of your study and those of other studies about individual differences mentioned in the readings and discussed in class. Finally, briefly identify similarities or differences between your findings and your own second language learning profile.

Midterm paper evaluation criteria
This assignment is a practical application of the readings done in the first half of the semester. Accordingly, students will be evaluated on the extent to which they demonstrate an understanding of the concepts presented in course lectures and required readings as they apply these concepts to their own data.

Final paper: Interpretive literature review and synthesis
The objectives of this final project assignment are as follows:
• to synthesize a set of key studies directly related to a specific topic in second language learning;
• to interpret their significance to the study of second language learning;
• to demonstrate and apply critical skills and relevant knowledge developed through the readings, lectures, and discussion that comprise this course.

Present an overview and in-depth discussion of a particular topic related to second language learning. You must confirm your topic with the course instructor. Some examples are:
• age
• aptitude
• motivation
• willingness to communicate
• learner styles
• form-focused instruction
• task-based instruction
• corrective feedback
• practice
• attention
• noticing
• explicit vs. implicit learning
• instructional input
• learner output
• teacher-student interaction
• learner-learner interaction
• L1 use in L2 learning/teaching
• language attrition
Begin by clearly identifying the question or issue you intend to explore and then organize your paper according to clearly titled subsections to reflect the development of your argument or position.

Synthesize the studies, interpreting them and providing commentary, in such a way as to develop the argument or position that you support in light of your reflection and intensive reading on the topic.

Your final paper should be between 12 and 15 pages in length (double-spaced, excluding references). Include a 200 word abstract at the beginning and, at the end, a Reference List with a minimum of 10 bibliographic references; avoid the use of second-hand references—instead, try to consult original sources.

**Final paper evaluation criteria**

I. Organization and Content

   a. Introduction
      * Provide background/motivation for your interest in the topic
      * Present the prevailing views (or controversies) concerning your paper's topic, drawing on your research of the topic

   b. Review of the Literature
      * Synthesize the findings/arguments of the articles in relation to your chosen topic
      * Interpret the themes you have found in the literature you have reviewed
      * Provide a critical opinion on the research you have reviewed relating to the topic
      * Reach appropriate conclusion(s) on the basis of the research you have reviewed
      * Reflect on the implications of the findings of the studies you have reviewed

   c. Conclusion
      * Provide a brief summary of what you said in the paper
      * Discuss limitations of your literature review (what aspects of the topic or articles do you NOT review and discuss?)
      * Provide suggestions for future research (what suggestions for specific research on this topic do you have?)

II. Format and Mechanics

   * Include a 200 word abstract
   * Apply relevant course terminology appropriately
   * Organize your paper so that it is easy and clear to follow (i.e., use subheadings)
   * Provide a reference list of the articles referred to in paper (do NOT list any sources that you have not mentioned in your paper)
   * Relevance/currency of the articles; they represent past, but up-to-date research
   * All references within your paper and in the final references list are documented appropriately following APA style
   * Your paper is well written in a formal academic register, is of appropriate length, and is edited for grammar, spelling, and punctuation
Final paper presentation

Students are required to share your literature review findings with the class by presenting your final paper through PowerPoint slides for 20 minutes followed by a 10 minute Q&A. The PowerPoint presentation file must be sent to me electronically by 4 pm the day before your presentation date. Class handouts for your presentation are encouraged.

Final paper class presentation evaluation criteria

Holistic evaluation that takes into consideration the following:

- Correct presentation of the subject matter
- Clarity of each slide
- Coherence of the whole presentation
- Quality of oral presentation
- Kept within the time slot
- Ability to address audience’s questions

Grading Scale

A   = 94-100 pts
A-  = 90-93
B+  = 86-89
B   = 80-85
B-  = 75-79
C   = 70-74
D   = 60-69
F   = below 60pts
Academic Policies

Please be aware of the following university, departmental, and classroom policies:

1. **Course Prerequisite:** Although there are no courses required to enroll in this course, it is advised that the students who have not taken TESL 501 (English Language Teaching-I) and/or TESL-500(Principles of Linguistics) see the instructor at the beginning of the semester.

2. **Attendance and participation:** Please note that part of your grade will be based on class participation and attendance - if you miss more than four classes, you will not be able to pass this course. Also final paper class presentation is considered the most important part of your participation, thus your absence from this will result in a half grade reduction.

3. **Late Work:** In fairness to students who complete their assignments in a timely manner, late work will be penalized, except under exigent circumstances brought to my attention. In the case of your final paper, any late submission will result in a half grade reduction penalty.

4. **Academic Integrity:** As students and scholars, we are held to the University’s Academic Integrity Code. Academic dishonesty and plagiarism (passing off someone else’s words, ideas, or work as your own; copying and pasting from the internet; writing papers without properly citing sources, etc.) will not be tolerated under any circumstances. I am required to report cases of academic dishonesty to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS), whose policy is to fail students for the course. For more information, please refer to this site:
   http://www.american.edu/academics/integrity/index.htm.

5. **Library Support:** For assistance with conducting searches in the library databases, doing a research-based study, or getting familiar with APA citations, students are encouraged to contact or make an appointment with Alex Hodges, the AU’s TESOL librarian faculty at ext. 3845 /Email: hodges@american.edu. Also, AU library offers a variety of on-line tutorials designed to help you with your course projects. For more information on how to get research help, refer to this site:
   http://www.library.american.edu/tutorial/index.html

6. **The Writing Center:** This center sponsored by CAS offers free, one-on-one coaching for all AU students at any stage of their writing process. Writing consultants focus on supporting the writer rather than producing a product: they do not prepare papers for students; they prepare students for papers. Students are encouraged to call for an appointment (ext. 2991)—sessions begin on the hour and usually last about 45 minutes at Battelle-Tompkins 228. Please note that the writing consultants at the Center are NOT editors or proofreaders and have a writing assignment sheet to bring with you at the time of your appointment. For more information, refer to the site:
   http://www.american.edu/cas/writing/index.cfm

7. **Academic Support Center:** This Center offers study skills workshops, individual instruction, tutor referrals, and services for students with learning disabilities. For more information concerning these services, please contact the ASC at ext. 3360 (Mary Graydon Center Room 243)

8. **Disability Support Services:** AU offers technical and practical support and assistance with accommodations for students with physical, psychological, and learning disabilities. If you require accommodations in this course, please contact DSS at ext. 3315 (Mary

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Graydon Center Room 206). Please also speak to me directly so that we can make the appropriate classroom arrangements to address your needs.

9. **Counseling Center:** College life is sometimes stressful and demanding. If at any time you wish to speak to a mental health professional in a private and respectful setting, please contact the Counseling Center at ext. 3500, or visit them at the Mary Graydon Center, room 214. The Counseling Center offers counseling and consultations regarding personal concerns, self-help information, and makes referrals to off-campus mental health resources.

10. **Emergency Preparedness:** In the event of a declared pandemic (influenza or other communicable disease), American University will implement a plan for meeting the needs of all members of the university community. Should the university be required to close for a period of time, we are committed to ensuring that all aspects of our educational programs will be delivered to our students. These may include altering and extending the duration of the traditional term schedule to complete essential instruction in the traditional format and/or use of distance instructional methods. Specific strategies will vary from class to class, depending on the format of the course and the timing of the emergency. Faculty will communicate class-specific information to students via AU e-mail and Blackboard, while students must inform their faculty immediately of any absence due to illness. Students are responsible for checking their AU e-mail regularly and keeping themselves informed of emergencies. In the event of a declared pandemic or other emergency, students should refer to the AU Web site (www.prepared.american.edu) and the AU information line at (202) 885-1100 for general university-wide information, as well as contact their faculty and/or respective dean’s office for course and school/college-specific information.

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<tr>
<th>IMPORTANT DATES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First day of class</td>
<td>1/13</td>
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<tr>
<td>*Midterm paper due</td>
<td>3/3</td>
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<tr>
<td>*Final paper due</td>
<td>4/21</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final paper presentation</td>
<td>4/21, 4/28</td>
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<tr>
<td>Last day of class</td>
<td>4/28</td>
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*Notes: Your midterm and final paper assignments must be submitted both electronically (sheen@american.edu) before the class on its due date as well as in a hard copy. For the email submission, use the following naming convention in your email subject line and MS Word file attachment as: ‘TESL523 Midterm’ ‘first name’ ‘last name’, ‘TESL523 final’ ‘first name’ ‘last name’ (e.g. TESL523 final John Doe).
Course Outline

Jan 13  Introduction to the Course

Jan 20  What is ‘second language acquisition’? & developmental sequences
Required reading: Ellis (2008), Chapter 1
Lightbown & Spada (2006), Chapter 1

Jan 27  Theories of L2 learning
Required reading: Lightbown & Spada (2006), Chapter 2
VanPatten & Williams (2007)

Feb 3  Individual differences in L2 learning: Part I
Required reading: Lightbown & Spada (2006), Chapter 3

Article presentation #1
*Note: all presentation articles are pre-class required readings

Feb 10  Individual differences in L2 learning: Part II
Required reading: Lightbown & Spada (2006), Chapter 3

Article presentation #2

Feb 17  Learner language
Required reading: Lightbown & Spada (2006), Chapter 4

Article presentation #3

Feb 24  Observing learning and teaching in L2 classrooms
Required reading: Lightbown & Spada (2006), Chapter 5

Article presentation #4

Mar 3  Corrective feedback and learner uptake
Required reading: Lyster & Ranta (1997)
Sheen (2004)

Midterm paper due (both electronic and hardcopy submission)
Mar 10  
**SPRING BREAK: NO CLASS**

Mar 17  
**Five proposals for classroom teaching**  
*Required reading:* Lightbown & Spada (2006), Chapter 6, pages 137-165  
*Article presentation #5*

Mar 24  
**Form-focused instruction: Part I**  
*Required reading:* Lightbown & Spada (2006), Chapter 6, pages 165-180  
*Article presentation #6*

March 31  
**Form-focused instruction: Part II**  
*Article presentation #7*

April 7  
**Use of L1 in L2 classrooms**  
*Required reading:* Scott & de la Fuente (2008)  
*Article presentation #8*

April 14  
**SLA research and language pedagogy**  
*Required reading:* Ellis (2008), Chapter 17  
*Article presentation #9*

April 21  
**Final paper presentations**  
*Final paper due* (both electronic and hardcopy submission)  

Note: This is the most important part of your class attendance and participation. Those who do not attend this presentation session will be penalized (i.e. a half grade reduction).

Apr 28  
**Final paper presentations & wrap up**  

Note: This is the most important part of your class attendance and participation. Those who do not attend this presentation session will be penalized (i.e. a half grade reduction).