I. Administrative
   A. Structure of the Course
   B. General Questions?

II. Language
   A. Language as an acquired characteristic of human beings
      1. Spoken first, then written
      2. Nature vs. nurture—what role genes, and what role culture?
      3. Might it have its place secured by its social role, a la grooming in chimpanzees?
      4. Exhibits properties: discrete infinity
   B. Languages as varied forms of language
      1. Language is genetically determined, but allows for variability.
      2. Language is organic, varying with individuals and cultures.
      3. With geographical separation comes significant variation.
      4. The taxonomic idea—language families and languages.

III. Chomsky Overview
   A. The Central Problem: “… explain how people can speak and understand new sentences, new in their experience or perhaps in the history of the
B. **Big questions:**

1. What is language?
2. What is knowledge?
3. How do they relate to one another?

C. What *exactly* is language? And how does this relate to languages?

1. **Language as External:** language can be seen as a socially distributed medium of communication, or more abstractly, as a set of sentences taken to be pairs of phonological form and logical form.

   a. Lewis is a big proponent of this view. He takes language to be a medium of communication, i.e., a social phenomenon that is a part of the natural history of human beings; by contrast, a language is a formal system that assigns meanings to strings of sounds/symbols.

   b. *E-languages:* These are *extensional* or *externalized* languages, i.e., sets of objects that are external to individual speakers. For example, they could be the “totality of all utterances” or a set of sentence-meaning pairs, or a Platonic object.

2. **Language as Internal:** language is a biological property of individual organisms, and so a property distributed across species to which we belong.

   a. Chomsky is a champion of this view, and he takes all other mention of language/s to be an abstraction from this. (See Chomsky.)

   b. *I-languages:* A system represented in the mind/brain, ultimately by physical mechanisms, and in this sense internalized; it is a particular characterization of a function that takes physical events and things and assigns status to them. These are real things and it is these that we should focus on in language study—language study becomes empirical science.

D. What *exactly* is knowledge? And how does this relate to language?
1. Specifically: “What is the system of knowledge attained by a person who speaks and understands a language? How is that knowledge acquired? How is that knowledge put to use?” The last question divides between perception and production

2. Knowledge of language is not an ability – you can change the ability to use a language without changing the knowledge of language

3. It is an internally realized species property that can be realized with very little input (“poverty of stimulus” (732))

E. Two big ideas behind the “generative grammar” approach to language:

1. “Cognitive revolution” – that language is not a “system of habits or abilities” but rather a “computational system of the mind/brain” (733)

2. “Shift of perspective from rule systems to a principles-and-parameters approach” in making out how language is realized in us

IV. Argument Work