

## Susan Goldin-Meadow, the Irving B. Harris Professor in Psychology, Human Development, the College

**By William Harms**  
*News Office*

Susan Goldin-Meadow knows that good teaching requires responding to student interests.

She arranged a special research class that meets at 8 a.m. for a half

dozen of her students who became fascinated during a course she taught last quarter with the problem of figuring out what young children hear.

This topic, which is important to understanding language acquisition, presents particular research problems because of the overwhelming amount of data that needs to be collected—every word a child hears in a day from parents, caregivers and other children.

"Normally what we study are only small pieces of all of that data," said Goldin-Meadow, the Irving B. Harris Professor in Psychology, Human Development and the College. "What we've been thinking about is how to develop a coding procedure to get information on all of what a child hears."

Goldin-Meadow and her students are still exploring the topic, but the lively discussions she has with them represent her own satisfaction with teaching in the College.

"Our students are wonderfully smart, thoughtful, creative and energetic," Goldin-Meadow said. "They come to the classes



*Susan Goldin-Meadow conducts the special research class she arranged for a group of her students who wanted to delve deeper and analyze what young children hear.*

eager to learn."

The students in her early morning class had been enrolled in her course, Introduction to Language Acquisition. Goldin-Meadow also teaches a course in the Mind sequence in the Core, Introduction to Developmental Psychology, Research Methods in Language Acquisition, and Communicative Uses of Nonverbal Behavior.

When Goldin-Meadow, who has taught at the University since 1976, thinks about whom she admires as a teacher, she recalls a professor at the University of Pennsylvania, where she was a graduate student.

"When I was at Penn, I studied with Henry Gleitman," she said. "Henry is a wonderful role model as a teacher. He gives superb lectures that are not only beautifully presented but are thoughtfully crafted. Equally important, as a mentor, he really listens to what you're saying. He pulls out the good ideas and helps you develop them and present them in their best light."

She also admires the teaching abilities of her husband, William Meadow, Professor in Pediatrics, whom she describes as having, "the ability to always figure out what strengths a student has and how those strengths can be used to take the next step. I think he can teach absolutely anything."

In her own teaching, Goldin-Meadow combines discussions with her lectures.

To foster discussion with participation by all of her students, including the less-vocal ones, she asks students to write out questions ahead of time. This technique helps her identify students' interests before the class meets, and she can call upon students in class, knowing they all have something to contribute.

"When I lecture, I try not to just give students facts. They can find facts in a book. What I try to do is to have a point in each lecture, to make an argument, to provide a perspective."

She also shows videotapes during her lectures, often drawn from her own research on children and gesturing or from other sources that have recorded children's behaviors.

"The videotapes are very effective—they make the phenomena

that we're reading and talking about much more real," she explained. "I think the students appreciate the opportunity to see actual children in action."

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