

Introduction to the Study of Language

LIN 306—Unique Number 40100

Spring 2016

M/W/F 1:00–2:00 p.m., GAR 0.132

Instructor: Kate Mesh
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Office Hours: CLA 4.700, Th 12–1:30, F 2–3:30, or by appointment

Description: This course will introduce you to linguistics, the scientific study of language. We'll approach the topic from the perspective of cognitive science, a discipline that asks: *what do we have to be like in order to produce and understand language?* To get at this question we will explore the features of individual languages of the world, asking what makes them similar and considering the hypothesis that they are all structured by a single, underlying 'universal grammar'. To make our survey comprehensive, we will consider two human language types: spoken languages, which dominate among the world's languages, and signed languages, which arise in communities with a population of deaf people whose communicative needs are not met with speech. These are both natural language types, and a description of the features of 'Language' in the abstract will have to account for languages in both modalities.

Goals: Students will gain an understanding of the study of human language. Students will also gain a familiarization with the variety of languages in the world, and with the sub-disciplines within linguistics that investigate their properties.

Course Format & Requirements:

Texts:

- O'Grady, Archibald, Aronoff, and Rees-Miller. 2009. *Contemporary Linguistics* (6th ed.). Bedford/St. Martin's. [Abbreviated as CLing in the course schedule]
- Fox. 2008. *Talking Hands: What Sign Language Reveals About the Mind*. Simon & Schuster.
- Jackendoff. 1995. *Patterns In The Mind: Language And Human Nature*. Basic Books
- Additional readings will be available through Canvas (<http://canvas.utexas.edu/>).

Evaluation:

- Your grade in this course will be determined by homework (totaling 40%), exams (totaling 30%) Writing Assignments (totaling 24%) and Participation (totaling 6%).

- **Homework Assignments** will be due at the end of most units. Most assignments will be problem sets taken from, or modeled on, the primary textbook for the course (Contemporary Linguistics). Some assignments will require to you ask yourself and others about language use in everyday life. Each homework assignment will be worth 100 points, and the proportion of points earned to points possible of these assignments will be worth 40% of your final grade. Homework is due by 11:59pm on the date listed on the syllabus Each late day will cost you a 15% penalty, and homework will not be accepted more than 3 days late. These penalties are applied to the individual homework assignment, not to your homework grade as a whole.
- I will give you three **Short (3–5 Page) Writing Assignments** (each worth 8% of your grade). For the first you will summarize a debate within the field of linguistics and argue for the side that you find most convincing. For the second you will describe a linguistic issue that has become politicized in the United States and argue for the approach you believe lawmakers should take. For both of these papers, I will provide you with several published articles and at least one source in another media format (film, television or radio) to inform you about the perspectives taken on the the issue. I will expect you to summarize the opinions in the sources, form an opinion on the issue, and argue for that opinion. Your assignment for the third paper will be to substantially revise one of the first two papers. I will provide you with a more detailed set of instructions when I distribute each of the short writing assignments.
- Three in-class **Exams** (each worth 10% of your grade) will be given during the course. The last of these will *not* be a cumulative final exam, but it will be given during the Final Examination period at a time to be determined by the Registrar. No make-up exams will be given (aside from accommodations for excused absences).
- Your **Participation** grade will be determined based on: 1) Meeting the Linguistics Department Experimental Requirement (worth 2% of your grade; see the longer description below), and 2) your active participation in class (worth 4% of your grade). I will gauge your participation based on: whether you ask questions in class on multiple occasions, whether you participate in class discussions on multiple occasions, and whether you visit office hours at least once in the semester (to look for help or to ask more about a topic that interested you). I know that you have your own way of engaging with course materials and with lecturers and other students. If you are wondering whether you are participating enough in class, come by my office hours and talk to me about it.
- Students will receive letter grades according to the following minimum scores: A 93.0, A- 90.0, B+ 87.0, B 83.0, B- 80.0, C+ 77.0, C 73.0, C- 70.0, D+ 67.0, D 63.0, D- 60.0, F 0.

Linguistics Department Experimental Requirement

This course has an experimental requirement. This requirement is designed to allow students to gain some familiarity with how some types of linguistics research are conducted. Students may fulfill this requirement by **either** participating in **one experiment** that lasts approximately one hour, **or** by attending **one lecture** that will be held outside regular class times. The experiments are part of ongoing research in the department and will illustrate features of language structure and use that are relevant to topics covered in the core linguistics curriculum. Similarly, the lecture will be on topics covered in the core linguistics curriculum. Failure to complete this requirement will result in a lowered course grade. Your course final grade will be lowered by 2 points if you fail to complete this requirement.

IMPORTANT: Don't leave the experimental requirement to the end of the semester! The last experiments will be scheduled during reading week at the latest. Don't count on sufficient experiment slots being available for everyone to fulfill this requirement at that late date. I highly recommend that you fulfill your experimental requirement by week 15.

Policies:

Academic Dishonesty: You can discuss homework assignments with each other, but do all your own work. I encourage you—and sometimes require you—to read published authors' writing and respond to it for some assignments. Always cite other writers when you use their words or refer to their ideas. If you have questions about how to paraphrase in a way that is not plagiarizing, please refer to the UT Undergraduate Writing Center's helpful guidelines: (<http://uwc.utexas.edu/paraphrasing/>). Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. For more information please visit the Student Judicial Services website at http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint__student.php.

Assignment Submission: Assignments will be submitted electronically through Canvas, and must be a typed PDF document. In a few cases I will explicitly ask you to upload an image of a drawing as a .jpg or .png file. These are the only file types that I can be assured to receive in Canvas, so they are the only file types I will accept. Make sure your name or other identifying information is visible in the text of any document you upload.

Students with Disabilities: UT Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 471-6259 (voice) or 232-2937 (video phone), or see <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/forcstudents.php>. Faculty are not required to provide accommodations without an official accommodation letter from SSD.

Religious Holy Days: By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least 14 days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, I will give you an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

Screens and Phones: This is one of the few classes where handouts are still on paper. You don't need screens to take notes in this class, so don't use them. Put your laptops and phones away when you come in, please.

Communication: Per UT policy, email is official communication, and you will be responsible for all information in emails sent to you.

Schedule:

A tentative schedule for the course is provided below. You can expect that there will be modifications to the assigned readings, topics and possibly exam dates. I will announce any such changes in class.

LECTUREREADINGS**Ses. 1–4 The Scientific Study of Language**

<i>w</i>	1/20/16: Syllabus Review/Intro	n/a
<i>f</i>	1/22/16: Some Things Linguists Care About, & Some Things You Think Linguists Care About, But Trust Me, They Totally Don't	Jackendoff Ch.1: Finding Our Way Into the Problem (pp. 3–7) Jackendoff Ch.2: The Argument for Mental Grammar (pp. 8-13)
<i>f</i>	1/22/16: HW1 due	
<i>m</i>	1/25/16: Language as an Instinct	Pinker Ch.1: An Instinct to Acquire an Art (pp. 1–12) Jackendoff Ch.3: The Argument for Innate Knowledge (pp. 21–35)
<i>w</i>	1/27/16: Language as an Instinct and (Lowercase-l) languages	Fox Ch. 4: The Sign-Language Instinct (pp. 55–67)

Ses. 5–8 Phonetics

<i>f</i>	1/29/16: Articulators & the IPA	An Introduction to Language Ch. 6: Phonetics (pp. 229–234, image p. 36. Review the IPA symbols on p. 233 using http://www.ipachart.com/)
<i>f</i>	1/29/16: HW2 due	
<i>m</i>	2/1/16: Consonants	An Intro. Ch. 6, cont'd (pp. 234–245)
<i>w</i>	2/3/16: Vowels	An Intro. Ch. 6, cont'd (pp. 246–257)
<i>f</i>	2/5/16: Sign Phonetics	An Intro. Ch. 6, cont'd (pp. 257–260), Fox Ch. 6: The Atoms of Sign (pp. 93–100)
<i>f</i>	3/6/16: HW3 due	

Ses. 9–12 Phonology

<i>m</i>	2/8/16: Phonology: Speech	CLing Ch. 3: Phonology (pp. 59–70)
<i>w</i>	2/10/16: Phonology: Speech	CLing Ch. 3, cont'd (pp. 71–76)
<i>f</i>	2/12/16: Phonology: Speech	CLing Ch. 3, cont'd (pp. 77–86)
<i>f</i>	2/12/16: HW4 due	
<i>m</i>	2/15/16: Phonology: Speech	<i>Review session: no new reading.</i>
<i>w</i>	2/17/16: Phonology: Sign	Fox Ch. 6: The Atoms of Sign (pp. 100–110)

LECTUREREADINGS**S. 13–15 Morphology**

<i>f</i>	2/19/16: Words and their Parts	CLing Ch. 4: Morphology: The Analysis of Word Structures
<i>s</i>	2/21/16: HW5 due	
<i>m</i>	2/22/16: Words and their Parts	Fox Ch. 10: The Web of Words (pp. 155–169)
<i>w</i>	2/24/16: Signs and their Parts	No reading for this session, <i>use the time to review for Exam 1!</i>

Fri. 2/26/16: Exam 1 on Sessions 1-15**S. 16–19 Syntax**

<i>s</i>	2/28/16: Writing Assign. 1 due	
<i>m</i>	2/29/16: Spoken Lang. Syntax	Jackendoff Ch. 6: Syntactic Structure (pp. 68–82)
<i>w</i>	3/2/16: Spoken Lang. Syntax	CLing Ch. 5: Syntax (pp. 155–182)
<i>f</i>	3/4/16: Spoken Lang. Syntax	CLing Ch. 5, cont'd (pp. 183–198)
<i>s</i>	3/6/16: HW6 due	
<i>m</i>	3/7/16: Signed Lang. Syntax	Fox Ch. 12: Grammar in Midair (pp. 178–191)

S. 20–21 Semantics & Pragmatics

<i>w</i>	3/9/16: Semantics/Pragmatics in Speech and Sign	CLing CH. 6: Semantics (pp. 203–220)
<i>f</i>	3/11/16 Semantics/Pragmatics in Speech and Sign	CLing CH. 6, cont'd (pp. 232–240)
<i>s</i>	3/13/16: HW7 due	

Spring Break**S. 22–24 Language Acquisition**

<i>m</i>	3/21/16: First Lang. Acquisition	Jackendoff Ch. 8: How Children Learn Language (pp. 101–111)
<i>w</i>	3/23/16: First Lang. Acquisition	CLing Ch. 10: First Language Acquisition (pp. 351–366)
<i>f</i>	3/25/16: First Lang. Acquisition.	CLing Ch. 10, cont'd (pp. 367–385)
<i>s</i>	3/27/16: Writing Assign. 2 due	

LECTUREREADINGS**S. 25–27 Language Acquisition In Special Circumstances**

<i>m</i>	3/28/16: The Forbidden Experiment	Jackendoff Ch. 9: Language Acquisition Under Unusual Circumstances (pp. 112–125)
<i>w</i>	3/30/16: The Experiment Realized	Jackendoff Ch. 10, cont'd (pp. 126–140)
<i>f</i>	4/1/16: But is it the Experiment After All?	No reading for this session, <i>use the time to review for Exam 2!</i>
<i>s</i>	4/3/16: HW8 due	

Mon. 4/4/16: Exam 2 on Sessions 16–26**S. 28–30 Historical Language Change**

<i>w</i>	4/6/16: Language Change	CLing Ch. 7: Historical Linguistics: The Study of Language Change (pp. 245–262)
<i>f</i>	4/8/16: Language Change	CLing Ch. 7, cont'd (pp. 262–287)
<i>s</i>	4/10/16: HW9 due	
<i>m</i>	4/11/16: Historical Language Change	Cling Ch. 7: (pp. 278–289)

S. 31–33 Language & the Brain

<i>w</i>	4/13/16: Language and the Brain	Jackendoff Ch. 11: Language & the Brain (pp. 141–155)
<i>f</i>	4/15/16: Language and the Brain	CLing Ch. 13: Brain and Language (pp. 459–482)
<i>s</i>	4/17/16: HW10 due	
<i>m</i>	4/18/16: Language and the Brain	Fox. Ch. 16: The Signing Brain (pp. 246–271)

S. 34–35 Dialects: Facts & Controversies

<i>w</i>	4/20/16: What is a Dialect?	CLing Ch. 14: Language in Social Contexts (Sections 1, 2, 6, and 8)
<i>f</i>	4/22/16: A Closer Look at Texas English	“Texas English” (weblink to be distributed via Canvas announcement)
<i>s</i>	4/24/16: HW11 due	

LECTUREREADINGS**S. 36–38 Languages of the World**

<i>m</i>	4/25/2015: Language Diversity	CLing Ch. 8: The Classification of Languages (pp. 297–302)
<i>w</i>	4/27/16: A Spoken Lang. Survey	CLing Ch. 8, cont'd (pp. 303–310)
<i>f</i>	4/29/16: A Signed Lang. Survey	<i>No assigned reading</i>
<i>s</i>	5/1/16: HW12 due	

S. 39–41 Language Endangerment, Documentation and Preservation

<i>m</i>	5/2/16: Lang. Revitalization	Article by language Activist Perla Garcá Miranda (file uploaded to Canvas)
<i>w</i>	5/4/16: Language Endangerment	Evans Ch. 1: Warramurrungunji's Children (pp. 5–24, file uploaded to Canvas)
<i>f</i>	5/6/16: Lang. Documentation	<i>No reading for this class; come prepared to discuss documentation methods.</i>
<i>s</i>	5/8/16: Writing Assign. 3 due	

Exam 3 on Sessions 27–41 will be held May 12, 2 PM PM in GAR 1.126 (Note that is is *not* a cumulative final exam. The exam should take you one hour to complete, though you are welcome to stay for the full two hours.)