LING/ANTH 311 – General Linguistics

Section 01: MW 3:10–4:30, Vollum 116
Section 02: TTh 1:10–2:30, Eliot 126
Section 03: TTh 2:40–4:00, Eliot 126

Course Syllabus
Fall 2007

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(or by appointment)    (or by appointment)

PREREQUISITES
There are no prerequisites for this course, other than an interest in language. Some familiarity with traditional grammar terms such as noun, verb, preposition, syllable, consonant, vowel, phrase, clause, sentence, etc., would be useful, but is by no means required.

CONTENT AND FOCUS OF THE COURSE
This course is an introduction to the scientific study of human language. Starting from the basic questions “What is language?” and “What do we know when we know a language?”, we proceed to examine the properties of language from a variety of perspectives. From a socio-cultural viewpoint, language may be understood as a social institution (albeit one with unique properties), and as the primary means through which symbolic value, and human society itself, is produced, maintained, and represented. From a cognitive viewpoint, language may be understood as a system of knowledge within the mind of the language user (a mental grammar), which can be studied empirically and modeled formally. As both a social and a cognitive science, linguistics is allied with a number of other fields, including anthropology, mathematics/logic, philosophy, and psychology. Since language is such a fundamental feature of human life, linguistic theory and methodology also have implications for the study of history, the humanities (literature, semiotics, poetics, rhetoric, etc.), language teaching, and computer science, among other fields.

The course is divided roughly into several short units. We begin with a brief overview of the field and discuss some of the goals and methods of linguistic analysis. The main part of the course surveys some of the major sub-disciplines within the field of linguistics. These sub-disciplines examine the different levels of organization in grammar, and the place of language within a broader social context:

1. Morphology: The internal structure of words, how they are formed, their categories, and how they are related to other words in the speaker’s ‘mental lexicon’.
2. Phonetics: The sounds—or more broadly, gestures—of human languages, their acoustic and physiological properties, and how they are transcribed, classified, and described.
3. Phonology: How speech sounds are organized into systems of contrast, and how sounds interact with each other when they are combined to form larger units (syllables, words, etc.).
4. Sociolinguistics and variation: How linguistic form varies across space and time, and between (or within) social groups. How language use—and attitudes towards language users—are shaped by factors such as gender, age, ethnicity, class, religion, and access to political and economic power.
5. Syntax: How words are combined to form phrases and sentences.
(6) **Semantics and pragmatics**: The relationship between linguistic form and linguistic meaning/use. How words are interpreted, how the meanings of phrases/sentences are computed on the basis of the meanings of their parts, and how speakers employ linguistic expressions to perform communicative tasks (making assertions, asking questions, issuing commands, etc.).

(7) **Linguistic anthropology (and anthropological linguistics)**: How language embodies or expresses cultural meaning. How using language creates and reinforces social relationships and identities.

We conclude the course with a brief overview of the history of linguistics, and touch on some ‘big picture’ issues in the study of human language, such as the (possibly false) dichotomy between language as a socio-cultural institution and language as a cognitive system. We also discuss Chomsky’s *Universal Grammar* hypothesis, and consider what features of mental grammar (if any) are innate, and what features are learned and culture-dependent.

Naturally we won’t have time to explore any of these topics in depth. Our goal is to give you a very broad overview of the field, and to acquaint you with some of the research questions and debates with which linguists are currently engaged. Throughout the course, we will focus on developing sound argumentation and problem-solving skills, learning to identify and analyze real language data in order to construct productive, testable hypotheses—both about grammar itself, and about the relations between grammar and non-linguistic aspects of the socio-cultural universe. We hope to make you aware of the complexity and sophistication of your own (largely unconscious) linguistic knowledge, and in so doing, cause you to question some of your own preconceptions about what language is and how it works.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS, GRADING, AND POLICIES**

**Participation**

Students are expected to attend every class meeting and participate on a regular basis. Participation will count for approximately 20% of the course grade.

**Problem sets**

There will be 6 problem sets, handed out in class at regular intervals. Problem set answers may be submitted in hardcopy or electronic versions (*PDF only, please*). Hardcopy versions should be submitted in class on the date due. Electronic versions should be submitted as email attachments before the beginning of class on the date due. Due dates (subject to change) are given below (MW = dates for the Monday-Wednesday section, TTh = dates for the Tuesday-Thursday sections):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>problem set</th>
<th>handed out</th>
<th>due in class</th>
<th>graded by</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Morphological analysis / phonetics</td>
<td>Tues, Sep 4 (TTh) Wed, Sep 5 (MW)</td>
<td>Tues, Sep 18 (TTh) Wed, Sep 19 (MW)</td>
<td>Pearson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Phonetics and phonology</td>
<td>Tues, Sep 18 (TTh) Wed, Sep 19 (MW)</td>
<td>Tues, Oct 2 (TTh) Wed, Oct 3 (MW)</td>
<td>Pearson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) Variationist sociolinguistics</td>
<td>Tues, Nov 6 (TTh) Wed, Nov 7 (MW)</td>
<td>Tues, Nov 20 (TTh) Wed, Nov 21 (MW)</td>
<td>Hibbard</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each problem set is worth 10% of the total course grade. Problem sets must be turned in on time if you wish to receive full credit and comments. Late assignments will be penalized 10% of total possible points.
for each day they are late. Late assignments will not be accepted for credit if turned in after the problem set has been returned to students, or discussed in class, whichever comes first (moreover, late assignments will probably receive minimal comments, and may not be returned in a timely fashion).

Because it is impossible to do good science in a vacuum, you are encouraged—indeed, expected—to work on problem sets together, as long as you write up your answers separately and in your own words. So introduce yourself to your fellow students and form a study group today! You should also feel free to come see Matt or Steve if you’re having difficulty with the homework. (It is perfectly legitimate to seek help on an assignment before it is due—in fact, we encourage it!) We are always willing to discuss any aspect of the course, so please take full advantage of our services.

Final exam

The course concludes with an untimed comprehensive take-home exam, worth approximately 20% of the grade. The exam will be closed book and closed notes, and consist of data analysis questions and one or two short essays. Additional details will be provided later in the course. Most likely the exam will be handed out the last day of classes and due one week later.

ONLINE RESOURCES

Reed Linguistics Department homepage:  http://academic.reed.edu/linguistics/
Resources for linguistics students:  http://academic.reed.edu/linguistics/resources.html

The resources page includes links to sites with downloadable fonts, tools, and formatting packages, language-related blogs, animation and sound files, directories, FAQs, and other useful information.

COURSE OUTLINE AND READINGS

The following schedule lists the topics for class discussion, assigned readings, and the deadlines for written work and other assignments. <SH> (= Steve Hibbard) and <MP> (= Matt Pearson) designate the discussion leader(s) for that day.

There is no textbook for this course. Instead we will read selections from different textbooks, along with articles and book chapters from various sources. All readings are available through the library on e-reserve or print reserve, from the web, or directly from us (call numbers for books on print reserve are given in square brackets, along with other instructions on how to obtain readings). Reading assignments are listed under the class for which they should be completed, in the approximate order in which you should tackle them. Readings may be added, dropped, or shifted around as we go along.

(1) Mon, Aug 27 / Tues, Aug 28
Introduction: Introducing linguistics. Doing linguistic analysis. Overview of the course.  <SH, MP>

(2) Wed, Aug 29 / Thurs, Aug 30
Introduction: What is language? Properties of human language.  <SH, MP>

Reading:
  - N.B.: Concentrate on sections 1-3 of the Hockett article (pp. 163-179); section 4 contains a number of technical terms which will be introduced later.
(3) **Tues, Sept 4 / Wed, Sept 5**

**Morphology:** Morphological analysis and the ‘form first’ principle. Morphemes and categories. Types of word formation: affixation and reduplication. <MP>

**Reading:**
- Shopen (ed.), *Languages and Their Speakers* / chapter 1, Craig, “Jicaral: Field Work in Guatemala” (pp. 3-57). [P106.L318 1987]

**Homework:**
- Problem Set 1 handed out in class.

(4) **Thurs, Sept 6 / Mon, Sept 10**

**Morphology:** Morphological analysis and word formation continued. Problems for the notion morpheme: non-concatenative morphology and suppletion. Allomorphy. What is a word? <MP>

**Reading:**

(5) **Tues, Sept 11 / Wed, Sept 12**

**Phonetics:** Sounds versus letters. The anatomy of the vocal tract. Classifying and transcribing the sounds of English. The International Phonetic Alphabet. <MP>

**Reading:**
- Ladefoged, *A Course in Phonetics* / chapter 1, “Articulatory Phonetics” (pp. 1-15); chapter 2, “Phonology and Phonetic Transcription” (pp. 23-35); chapter 7, “Place and Manner of Articulation” (pp. 139-155). [P221.L2 2001 / e-reserve]

**Homework:**
- Before class, learn the phonetic symbols on pp. 26 and 29 of Ladefoged, and be prepared to practice transcribing words of English into IPA (you can ignore the vowel symbols for British English and concentrate on the ones for American English).
- Study the consonant chart on p. 35 of Ladefoged and learn the names for the different places and manners of articulation.

(6) **Thurs, Sept 13 / Mon, Sept 17**

**Phonetics:** More on the sounds of English (and other languages). Segments versus suprasegmental features (length, pitch, etc.). <MP>

**Reading:**

**Homework:**
- Visit the on-line UCLA Phonetics Archive to listen to sound files of the world’s languages, and practice phonetic symbols using the self-pronouncing IPA chart. Also, visit the University of Iowa’s Phonetics Flash Animation Project website to see flash animations of the human vocal tract articulating various sounds. Links to these sites can be found on the “Resources” page of the Linguistics Department website (URL given on p. 3 of the syllabus).
(7) **Tues, Sept 18 / Wed, Sept 19**  
*Phonology:* Coarticulation and phonetic detail. Broad versus narrow transcription. Contrastiveness. Phonemes and allophones. <MP>  

**Reading:**  
- Hayes, *Introductory Phonology* / chapter 2, “Phonemic Analysis” (pp. 23-51). [e-reserve / reserve folder]  
- Aronoff & Rees-Miller (eds.), *The Handbook of Linguistics.* / chapter 8, Cohn, “Phonology” (pp. 180-212). [P121.H324 2001 (reference section of the library) / e-reserve]  

**Homework:**  
- Problem Set 1 due in class.  
- Problem Set 2 handed out in class.

(8) **Thurs, Sept 20 / Mon, Sept 24**  
*Phonology:* Hierarchical structure in phonology (features, segments, syllables). Phonemic analysis. Writing simple phonological rules. <MP>  

**Reading:**  
- Hayes, *Introductory Phonology* / chapter 3, “More on Phonemes” (pp. 52-74). [e-reserve / reserve folder]  

(9) **Tues, Sept 25 / Wed, Sept 26**  
*Phonology:* Phonemic analysis continued: phonologically-conditioned allomorphy. Common phonological processes. Writing rules with features. <MP>  

**Reading:**  

(10) **Thurs, Sept 27 / Mon, Oct 1**  
*Sociolinguistics:* Introduction to quantitative, variationist sociolinguistics. <SH>  

**Reading:**  

(11) **Tues, Oct 2 / Wed, Oct 3**  
*Sociolinguistics:* Classic writings in the quantitative-variationist paradigm. <SH>  

**Reading:**  

**Homework:**  
- Problem Set 2 due in class.  
- Problem Set 3 handed out in class.
(12) **Thurs, Oct 4 / Mon, Oct 8**  
**Sociolinguistics and variation:** Contemporary developments in sociolinguistics. <SH>  
**Reading:**  
- Eckert, *Linguistic Variation as Social Practice: The Linguistic Construction of Identity at Belten High* / “Variation and Agency” (pp. 1-6); “Interpreting the Meaning of Variation” (pp. 7-45)  
  [P120.V37.E37 2000 / e-reserve]

(13) **Tues, Oct 9 / Wed, Oct 10**  
**Syntax:** Grammaticality. Constituent structure and ambiguity. Heads and phrases. Lexical categories and distributional tests. <MP>  
**Reading:**  
- Aarts, *English Syntax and Argumentation* / chapter 1, “Introduction” (pp. 3-7); chapter 2, “Function” (pp. 8-21). [PE1369.A2 2001 / e-reserve]

(14) **Thurs, Oct 11 / Mon, Oct 22**  
**Syntax:** Syntactic relations. Word order, case, and agreement. Tests for constituent structure. <MP>  
**Reading:**  
- Kroeger, *Analyzing Grammar: An Introduction* / chapter 3, “Constituent Structure” (pp. 26-50); chapter 4, “Semantic Roles and Grammatical Relations” (pp. 51-65); chapter 5, “Lexical Entries and Well-Formed Clauses” (pp. 66-86); chapter 7, “Case and Agreement” (pp. 102-127). [P126.K76 2005]

(15) **Tues, Oct 23 / Wed, Oct 24**  
**Syntax:** More on constituent structure tests. Practice tree drawing. <MP>  
**Reading:**  

**Homework:**  
- Problem Set 3 due in class.  
- Problem Set 4 handed out in class.

(16) **Thurs, Oct 25 / Mon, Oct 29**  
**Syntax:** Constituent structure and transformations. <MP>  
**Reading:**  
  ➢ N.B.: Concentrate on the first half of the chapter (roughly pp. 61-76).  
- Shopen (ed.), *Languages and Their Speakers* / chapter 3, Keenan & Ochs, “Becoming a Competent Speaker of Malagasy”, sections 0-3 (pp. 113-137). [P106.L318 1987]  
  ➢ N.B.: We will read the rest of this article later in the course.

(17) **Tues, Oct 30 / Wed, Oct 31**  
**Semantics:** The principle of compositionality. Entailment and other semantic relations. <MP>  
**Reading:**  
(18) Thurs, Nov 1 / Mon, Nov 5
Semantics: Quantification, scope, and polarity. <MP>

Reading:

(19) Tues, Nov 6 / Wed, Nov 7

Reading:

Homework:
- Problem Set 4 due in class.
- Problem Set 5 handed out in class.

(20) Thurs, Nov 8 / Mon, Nov 12
Language and culture: Introduction to the study of language in/and culture. <SH>

Reading:
- Duranti, Linguistic Anthropology / chapter 1, “The Scope of Linguistic Anthropology” (pp. 1-22); chapter 2, “Theories of Culture” (pp 23-50). [P35 D87 1997/e-reserve]

(21) Tues, Nov 13 / Wed, Nov 14
Language and culture: Linguistic- and semiotic-anthropological approaches to the study of language. <SH>

Reading:
- Hanks, Language and Communicative Practices / chapter 1, “Introduction: Meaning and Matters of Context” (pp. 1-17); chapter 2, “The Language of Saussure” (pp. 21-38); chapter 3, “From Signs to Sentences” (pp. 39-65); chapter 4, “North American Formalism and the Problem of Meaning” (pp. 66-87). [P106.H295 1996]

(22) Thurs, Nov 15 / Mon, Nov 19
Language and culture: Contemporary theories of language in/and culture: “language ideology.” <SH>

Reading:

Homework:
- Problem Set 6 handed out in class (MW section only).
(23) **Tues, Nov 20 / Mon, Nov 26 (no class on Wed, Nov 21)**

*Overview:* The history and philosophy of Western linguistics. <SH>

*Reading:*
- Seuren, *Western Linguistics: An Historical Introduction* / chapter 2, “The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries” (pp. 49-63; 74-104); chapter 3, “The Twentieth Century: Europe” (pp. 140-160); chapter 4, “The Twentieth Century: America” (pp. 178-190; 242-267; 279-286); chapter 7, “Meaning and Grammar” (pp. 459-476). [P61.S48 1998]

*Homework:*
- Problem Set 5 due in class (TTh sections only).
- Problem Set 6 handed out in class (TTh sections only).
- Students in the MW section should turn in Problem Set 5 by 3:10 PM on Wednesday, Nov 21. Because we are not meeting on Wednesday, assignments should be submitted via email, or in person to Steve’s office.

(24) **Tues, Nov 27 / Wed, Nov 28**

*Overview:* The history and philosophy of Western linguistics (continued). <SH>

*Reading:*
- Everett, “Cultural Constraints on Grammar and Cognition in Pirahã”, plus comments and reply (Current Anthropology, vol. 46, no. 4, pp. 621-646) [article available online through JSTOR, or at http://www.journals.uchicago.edu/CA/journal/issues/v46n4/054006/054006.web.pdf]
  - Comments on Everett’s paper (pp. 635-641), and Everett’s reply to the comments (pp. 641-644) are optional.

(25) **Thurs, Nov 29 / Mon, Dec 3**

*Overview:* The properties of human language (revisited): Language universals and the debate over innateness. What aspects of language structure are culturally determined? <SH,MP>

*Reading:*
- Nevins, Pesetsky, & Rodrigues, “Pirahã Exceptionality: A Reassessment” (pp. 1-58) [unpublished manuscript available online: go to http://ling.auf.net/lingBuzz/000411, and click on “pdf” to download the paper]

(26) **Tues, Dec 4 / Wed, Dec 5**

*Overview:* Language universals and innateness (continued). <SH,MP>

*Reading:*
- Everett, “Cultural Constraints on Grammar in Pirahã: A Reply to Nevins, Pesetsky, and Rodrigues (2007)” (pp. 1-32) [unpublished manuscript available online: go to http://ling.auf.net/lingBuzz/000427, and click on “pdf” to download the paper]

*Homework:*
- Problem Set 6 due in class.