Ling 320: Phonetics

Course Syllabus
Fall 2011

Class Meetings  
Tues/Thurs 1:10pm - 2:30pm, Vollum 234

Instructor  
Jennifer Nycz  
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Eliot 100A  
Office hours: Tuesdays 3-5pm & Weds 2-3pm

Prerequisites  
Linguistics 211 (or equivalent), or instructor consent

Required text  
Peter Ladefoged, A Course in Phonetics (5th or 6th edition).  
(Copies of the text have been placed on reserve at the college library.)  
Other readings will be distributed as required on Moodle.

Course Overview. This course is an introduction to linguistic phonetics. Over the semester we will cover several major areas of study, including articulatory phonetics (how the lungs, larynx, and vocal tract are used to produce speech), acoustic phonetics (the acoustic properties of speech sounds and how these can be analyzed), and speech perception (how the acoustic signal is translated by the ears and brain into linguistic units), as well as topics that span all of these areas (e.g. second language phonetics, the phonetics of singing).

Course Requirements and Assessment

Participation (20%): You are expected to attend every class meeting and participate in classroom activities such as discussions, production practice, phonetic analysis, and occasional quizzes. You may also be asked to participate in Moodle forums or other online activities.

Problem sets (60%): There will be six problem sets, each worth 10% of the grade. Problem sets will be handed out in class every 2-3 weeks, and due by class time one week later; they may be submitted as hard copies or as e-mail attachments.

Assignments must be turned in on time to receive full credit and comments. Extensions will be granted only in cases of illness, family emergency, etc. Unexcused 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.

You are encouraged to work on problem sets together, but your answers must be written up separately and in your own words.

Final project (20%): The final project will involve a comparative phonetic analysis of several language varieties; it will be an opportunity to synthesize and apply many of the skills you have learned over the semester. The details of this project will be handed out before Fall break, so that you may work on it throughout the second
half of the term.

Course Schedule - *Not set in stone!*

**Week 1 (8/30 & 9/1)**

**Introduction.** What is phonetics, how does it fit into linguistics (and other fields), and what will we be doing in this course?

**Articulatory Phonetics, Part 1.** The physiology of speech, starting with the lungs and the larynx.


**Week 2 (9/6 & 9/8)**

**Articulatory Phonetics, Part 2.** The vocal tract. How speech sounds are formed using the mouth and nasal passages.


**Transcription.** The International Phonetic Alphabet & transcription practice.


**Problem set 1 distributed on 9/8**

**Week 3 (9/13 & 9/15)**

**The Consonants of English.** Details of articulation. How they vary in context and across dialects.


**Cardinal vowels.** The vowel space. Reference vowels and their uses.


**Problem set 1 due 9/15**

**Week 4 (9/20 & 9/22)**

**Vowels of English.** Details of articulation. How they vary in context and across dialects.

**Basic Acoustics.** Sound waves and speech.


**Problem set 2 distributed on 9/22**

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**Week 5 (9/27 & 9/29)**

**The Source-Filter Theory & Acoustic Representations of Speech.** Waveforms & spectrograms. Introduction to Praat.


**Acoustic Analysis of Vowels.** Formants and how to measure them.


**Problem set 2 due 9/29**

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**Week 6 (10/4 & 10/6)**

**Acoustic Analysis of Consonants.** Voicing, noise, identifying place & manner.


**Suprasegmental Aspects of Speech.** Prosody, stress, pitch, intonation.


**Problem set 3 distributed on 10/6**

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**Week 7 (10/11 & 10/13)**

**Coarticulation and Connected speech.** Segments in context. Assimilation, reduction, elision, and other processes.

Problem set 3 due 10/13

Fall Break!

Week 8 (10/25 & 10/27)

Airstream Mechanisms and Phonation Types.


Consonants of Other Languages.


Problem set 4 distributed on 10/27

Week 9 (11/1 & 11/3)

Vowels of Other Languages.


Problem set 4 due 11/3

Week 10 (11/8 & 11/10)


Problem set 5 distributed on 11/10

Week 11 (11/15 & 11/17)


Week 12 (11/22)

Phonetics of Singing. Source/filter adjustments in vocal music and implications for perception.


Week 13 (11/29 & 12/1)

Phonetic Accommodation. How production and perception of speech varies in conversation.


Problem set 6 distributed on 12/1

Week 14 (12/6)

Course Wrap-up.

Problem set 6 due 12/8

Final project due 12/13