ORGANIZATION OF THE COURSE

Student Responsibilities

Students are responsible for reading the assigned work each week—*all* the work, *every* week. I strongly encourage all of you to give me honest and timely feedback regarding the amount and difficulty level of the reading. As many of you know, I sometimes assign heavy reading loads, but you may also know that I am very flexible; everything on this syllabus is open to adjustment or more radical change.

Each student will be responsible for preparing three questions directly relating to the week’s assigned reading. These questions can relate to matters you did not fully understand, or that you found particularly interesting or surprising—you have great latitude in choosing the topics and format. I reserve the right to call on students in class and to request that one or more of their questions be made topics of general discussion.

Each week, two students will volunteer (or be volunteered) to take special responsibility for reading one or more of the assignments (usually, a less-technical, more theoretical piece) particularly carefully and for leading the conference in discussion of that material.

Weekly Conferences

Each class period will be divided into three sections of (roughly) one hour apiece. During the first section I will present the week’s material in a lecture-like format. The second section will be devoted to students’ questions, concerns, and interests; here we will aim to address as many of students’ prepared questions as possible—the focus will be on the more technical material. The conference continues in the third and final section, which will revolve around more theoretical discussion led by students (chosen the previous week).

Grading, Exams

Weekly participation is clearly central to a challenging, stimulating, and ultimately successful conference. Thus, 50% of students’ final grade will be based on the degree to which you (i) evidence the fact that you have read and engaged
with the assigned readings, (ii) consistently produce critical, thoughtful questions in response to the weekly readings, (iii) successfully lead the class in discussion of your chosen (or assigned) reading, and (iv) generally engage critically, thoughtfully, and productively with your colleagues in conference. 20% of the final grade will be based on quizzes, essay questions, and problem-sets assigned over the course of the semester. The remaining 30% will be based on a midterm and a final exam.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

**WEEK 1**  
*Course Introduction*

Practicalities; what is change—and how can language do it (oh, oh: what is language again?); five distinct models of “explanation” in general and in linguistics; methodological individualism vs. holism; semiotic groundwork.  

No Reading (the only time, I can assure you)

**WEEK 2**  
*Historical Linguistics in Historico-Philosophical Context*

Perfect languages, Truth languages; Hebrew and Sanskrit; ideologies linking origins and identity; the ‘etymological fallacy’; comparative philology; evolutionary sciences and the development of historical linguistics; racial/racist ideologies in the history of linguistics.  

Alter; Olender

**WEEK 3**  
*The Young Grammarians and Regularity*

The Young Grammarian revolt: real or rhetorical; science and scientism-I; the status of regularity.  

Hock: 34-52; Amsterdamska; Hitchcock; Hockett; Malkiel; Kristo

**WEEK 4**  
*The Comparative Method*

Logically possible ways to explain lexical resemblance; the limits of the comparative method; kinds of change: sound change, analogy, semantic, lexical; what is sound change? The comparative method: how does it work? What can it do and what can’t it do?  

Hock: 556-581; Joseph & Janda: 183-243 (= Rankin; Harrison); Dyen, “Reconstruction, the Comparative Method…”; Greenberg, “Types of Linguistic Models in Other Disciplines;
**Atkinson & Gray**, “Curious Parallels and Curious Connections...”; **Percival**, “The Applicability of Kuhn’s Paradigms...”

**WEEK 5**

**Types of Sound Change; Internal Reconstruction**

Phonemic and non-phonemic; assimilation, weakening, loss; dissimilation, haplology, metathesis; epenthesis, elimination of hiatus; relative chronology; chain shifts, “drift”; the limits and potential of internal reconstruction.

**Hock**: 167-238; **Campbell**: 16-49; **Hock & Joseph**: 126-143; **Joseph & Janda**: 244-261 (= Ringe)

**WEEK 6**

**Analogical Change**

More-regular analogy: extension, leveling; less-regular analogy: reanalysis, “folk etymology,” hypercorrection, backformation; tendencies (laws[?]) of analogical change.

**Hock**: 167-279; **Joseph & Janda**: 425-460 (= Anttila; Hock)

**WEEK 7**

**Syntactic/Morphological Change, Grammaticalization**

Syntactic change: reanalysis, extension, and borrowing; grammaticalization: frequency of use, habitualization, automatization; grammaticalization as semantic change?

**Hock**: 309-379; **Joseph & Janda**: 575-263 (= Heine; Bybee)

**WEEK 8**

**Semantic Change**

Tendencies and causes of semantic change—universal “laws of thought”?: metaphor, metonymic extension, folk etymology, ellipsis; semantic change as culture change.

**Hock & Joseph**: 215-252; **Campbell**: 254-279; **Joseph & Janda**: 648-666 (= Fortson)

**WEEK 9**

**Contact and Borrowing; Pidgins and Creoles**

Areal linguistics and the full range of language relationship; what happens when languages come in contact (but don’t populations come in contact[?])? Subjugation, exploitation, colonialism...and language change (and language genesis). Can we define pidgins linguistically? The creole controversy: are all languages creoles, after all?

**Hock**: 380-425; 472-531; **Mufwene; Garrett**
WEEK 10  

**Theoretical Approaches to Language Change**

Major theoretical currents: Young Grammarian, structural-functionalism, generativism; strengths and weaknesses of each; approaches to explanation.

*Campbell: 282-298; McMahon: 14-68; Joseph & Janda: 713-735 (= Wolfram & Schilling-Estes)*

WEEK 11

**Explaining Language Change**

*Can* language change be explained at all? In what sense? The intersection of sociolinguistics and historical linguistics; is there an emerging paradigm in sociohistorical linguistics?

*Hock: 627-661; Labov; Joseph & Janda: 669-712 (= Ohala; Thomason)*

WEEK 12

**Language Standards and Standard Languages**

Standardization as a process; what does standardization have to do with change? Can we know where grammar ends and the norms imposed through standardization begin? If not, what does this mean for linguistics? If so, how?

*Joseph; Foley; Crowley*

*(Two weeks have been [deliberately] left open—one because we will, invariably, fall behind at some point, and the other to accommodate a topic that we decide to explore over the semester)*

**Texts**