LING 211 – Introduction to Linguistic Analysis

Section 01: TTh 1:40–3:00 PM, Eliot 103
Section 02: TTh 3:10–4:30 PM, Eliot 103

Course Syllabus
Fall 2019

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Fri, 1:00-2:00 Tue, 10:00-11:30
(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 basic questions such as “What is language?” and “What do we know when we know a language?” we investigate the human language faculty through the hands-on analysis of naturalistic data from a variety of languages spoken around the world. We adopt a broadly cognitive viewpoint throughout, investigating language as a system of knowledge within the mind of the language user (a mental grammar), which can be studied empirically and represented using formal models.

To make this task simpler, we will generally treat languages as though they were static systems. For example, we will assume that it is possible to describe a language structure synchronically (i.e., as it exists at a specific point in history), ignoring the fact that languages constantly change over time. In addition, we will generally abstract away from variation within speech communities based on factors such as gender, ethnicity, social class, dialect region, and level of formality. Variation and change are vitally important aspects of the study of language, but they are covered in depth in a separate introductory course, Linguistics 212 Introduction to Language, Culture, and Society.

This course is roughly divided into five 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 the core sub-fields of linguistic analysis, listed below, each of which focuses on a different domain of organization within mental grammar:

(1) Morphology: The abstract rules/constraints governing 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) Syntax: Principles governing how words are combined to form phrases and sentences.

(3) Semantics, pragmatics: The relationship between linguistic form and linguistic meaning/use. How words are interpreted, how the meanings of phrases and 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.).

(4) **Phonetics:** The sounds—or more broadly, linguistic gestures—of human languages, their acoustic and physiological properties, and how they are produced and perceived.

(5) **Phonology:** How speech sounds are organized into systems of contrast, and the abstract rules or constraints governing how speech sounds are realized, both on their own and when combined with other sounds to form larger speech units such as syllables, words, and phrases.

Naturally we won’t have time to explore any of these topics in depth. Our goal is to give you a broad overview of different domains of linguistic analysis, and to acquaint you with some of the research questions and debates with which linguists are currently engaged. Throughout the course, we focus on *doing analysis*: developing sound argumentation and problem-solving skills, learning to identify and analyze data in order to construct productive, testable hypotheses about what the principles of grammar are. We hope to make you aware of the complexity and sophistication of your own (largely unconscious) linguistic knowledge, and in so doing, inspire you to question some of your own preconceptions about how language works.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS, GRADING, AND POLICIES**

**Participation (20% of course grade).** Students are expected to attend every class meeting and participate on a regular basis, and may also be asked to participate in Moodle forums or other online activities.

**Problem sets (60% of course grade).** There will be six problem sets, each of which is worth 10% of the total course grade. Problem sets will be handed out and due in class (dates listed below). On the day a problem set is handed out in class, an electronic version will also be posted on the course Moodle page.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>problem set</th>
<th>handed out</th>
<th>due in class</th>
<th>graded by</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Morphology/syntax</td>
<td>September 10</td>
<td>September 24</td>
<td>Matt</td>
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<tr>
<td>(2) Syntax</td>
<td>September 24</td>
<td>October 10</td>
<td>Matt</td>
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<tr>
<td>(3) Syntax/semantics</td>
<td>October 10</td>
<td>October 29</td>
<td>Matt</td>
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<tr>
<td>(4) Phonetics</td>
<td>October 29</td>
<td>November 7</td>
<td>Sameer</td>
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<tr>
<td>(5) Phonology</td>
<td>November 7</td>
<td>November 21</td>
<td>Sameer</td>
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<tr>
<td>(6) Phonology/morphology</td>
<td>November 21</td>
<td>December 5</td>
<td>Sameer</td>
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Given the large size of this class, we strongly prefer that you submit your assignments in hard copy form. However, in cases of last-minute printer failure or other emergencies, we will also accept assignments as email attachments (in PDF format, emailed to the professor grading the problem set). Your answers must be typed, except where otherwise indicated. *Handwritten assignments will not be accepted.*

Assignments must be turned in on time if you wish to receive full credit and comments. Extensions will be granted only in cases of illness, family emergency, etc., at the discretion of the instructor grading the assignment. Unexcused late assignments will be penalized 10% of total possible points for each full 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 may not be returned with comments in a timely fashion.

Because it is impossible to do good science in a vacuum, you are encouraged (indeed, expected) to work on data sets together. So introduce yourself to your fellow students and form a study group, or use the Moodle forum to arrange problem set meet-ups! Note, however, that you must write up your problem set answers separately and *in your own words*: copying or collaboration on write-ups will be treated as academic dishonesty and a violation of the Honor Principle. You should feel free to come see Sameer or Matt, or consult with one of the course tutors, 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 make use of our services.
Final exam (20% of course grade). The course concludes with an untimed comprehensive take-home exam. The exam will consist of data analysis questions like the ones on the problem sets. It will be closed book and closed notes, and you will be required to work on it individually (no consulting with others). Additional details will be provided near the end of the course. Most likely the exam will be handed out on the Thursday after the last class meeting and due about 6 days later.

RESOURCES

Moodle. We have set up a Moodle page for this course. You can use this page to post your questions and responses to others’ questions; coordinate study sessions; and download e-reserve readings, problem sets, an extra copy of the syllabus, etc. You are encouraged to check the Moodle page regularly for updates to the class schedule, additional readings, and forum discussions. We may occasionally require that you use Moodle to post questions (or answers to questions) based on the readings and class discussions. Also, if you miss a class, you can go to the Moodle page to download copies of any handouts given out that day (these should be posted to Moodle by the end of the day).

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

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

Tutoring services. You should always feel free to consult Sameer or Matt for extra help on assignments. In addition, students are available for peer-to-peer tutoring. To find a list of tutors, go to info.reed.edu/tutor/tutors.taf. Click on “Tutoring Home” from the side menu, and select “Book a Tutor Here”. Then scroll down to LING 211 on the Book a Tutor page.

COURSE OUTLINE AND READINGS

This schedule lists the topics for class discussion, assigned readings, and the deadlines for written work and other assignments. M (= Matt) and S (= Sameer) designate the discussion leader(s) for the week.

There is no single textbook for this course. Instead we will read selections from different textbooks, along with articles and book chapters from various sources. Readings are required unless explicitly listed as optional. All readings are available through the library on print reserve, on e-reserve (accessible through Moodle), or directly from us. Call numbers for books on print reserve are given in square brackets. Reading assignments are listed under the week for which they should be completed, in the approximate order in which you should tackle them. Unless we notify you otherwise, readings are to be completed by the beginning of class on Thursday of the week for which they are assigned. Readings may be added, dropped, or shifted around as we go along.

(1) Tuesday, September 3 — Thursday, September 5

Introduction (M,S) : What is language? What is linguistics? Definitional properties and universals of human language. Overview of the course.

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.

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**Tuesday, September 10 — Thursday, September 12**


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

**Homework:**
- Problem set 1 handed out in class on Tuesday.

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**Tuesday, September 17 — Thursday, September 19**


**Reading:**

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**Tuesday, September 24 — Thursday, September 26**


**Reading:**
- Handout on constituent structure tests (distributed in class the previous week)

**Homework:**
- Problem set 1 due in class on Tuesday.
- Problem set 2 handed out in class on Tuesday.

Reading:
  - Concentrate on the first half of the Ouhalla chapter (roughly pp. 61-76). Note that Ouhalla uses the older label S’ instead of CP, and calls the landing site for wh-phrases “Comp” instead of the more up-to-date “specifier of CP”.

Semantics (M) : Compositionality. Entailment, presupposition, and other semantic relations. A simple extensional model of semantics.

Reading:

Homework:
- Problem set 2 due in class on Thursday.
- Problem set 3 handed out in class on Thursday.

Reading:
- Ladefoged /ˈlædəfəɡd/, A Course in Phonetics (5th or 6th ed.) / chapter 1 “Articulation and acoustics” (pp. 1-24); chapter 2 “Phonology and phonetic transcription” (pp. 33-47); chapter 3 “The consonants of English” (pp. 55-76). [P221.L2 2006, Moodle]

Homework:
- Problem set 3 due in class on Tuesday.
- Problem set 4 handed out in class on Tuesday.
- Links to the following websites are provided on the course Moodle page:
  o Visit the online UCLA Phonetics Lab to listen to sound files of the world’s languages, and practice phonetic symbols using the self-pronouncing IPA chart.
  o Visit the University of Iowa’s Sounds of Speech to see flash animations of the human vocal tract articulating various sounds in English, Spanish, and German.

(9) Tuesday, November 5 — Thursday, November 7

Phonology (S): Broad vs. narrow transcription of English. Phonological knowledge: what do we know about speech sounds? Contrast vs. allophony: what counts as “same” or “different” in speech sounds. The local environment analysis.

Reading:
- Hayes, Introductory Phonology / chapter 2 “Phonemic analysis” (pp. 19-46), chapter 3 “More on phonemes” (pp. 47-69). [P217.H346 2009, Moodle]

Homework:
- Problem set 4 due in class on Thursday.
- Problem set 5 handed out in class on Thursday.

(10) Tuesday, November 12 — Thursday, November 14

Phonology (S): Features of sounds and their natural classes. Assimilation and neutralization.

Reading:
- Hayes, Introductory Phonology, chapter 4 “Features” (pp. 70-102); chapter 6 “Phonological alternation I” (pp. 121-141). [P217.H346 2009, Moodle]
- Gussenhoven /ˈχɵsənɦəʊvən/ and Jacobs /ˈjakəps/, Understanding Phonology (2nd ed.) / chapter 5 “Distinctive features” (pp. 57-76). [P217.G867 2005, Moodle]

(11) Tuesday, November 19 — Thursday, November 21

Phonology (S): Abstraction: rule interaction, identifying underlying forms, and positing abstract representations.

Reading:

Homework:
- Problem set 5 due in class on Thursday.
- Problem set 6 handed out in class on Thursday.
(12) Tuesday, November 26

Phonology (S): Syllable structure: syllabification, ambisyllabicity, prosodic boundaries.

Reading:

(13) Tuesday, December 3 — Thursday, December 5

Phonology (S): Markedness, phonotactics: accidental vs. systematic gaps, underattestation, constraints.
Morphophonology (S): Nonconcatenative morphology: truncation, subtraction, featural morphemes.

Reading:
• Hayes, Introductory Phonology / chapter 8, "Morphophonemic analysis". [P217.H346 2009, Moodle]

Homework:
• Problem set 6 due in class on Thursday.

(14) Tuesday, December 10

Morphophonology (S): Nonconcatenative morphology: infixation, reduplication.