

LINGUIST 201: Introduction to Linguistic Theory

Course # 62575

Fall 2016

Instructor

Nicholas LaCara

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Office: Integrative Learning Center N434

Hours: Monday, Wednesday 3:30 PM – 4:30 PM

Location & Time

Room: Morrill Science Center N375

Days: Monday, Wednesday

Time: 1:25 AM – 2:15 PM

Website: moodle.umass.edu

Teaching Assistants

Alex Goebel

Email: agoebel@linguist.umass.edu

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Hours: Tues. 1:00 – 2:00, Thurs. 9:00 – 10:00

Michael Wilson

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Hours: Tues. & Thurs. 12:00 – 1:00

Christopher Hammerly

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Hours: Tues. & Thurs. 11:30 – 12:30

Rong Yin

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Hours: Tues. & Thurs. 10:00 – 11:00

1 Overview

This course introduces the essential building blocks of language and explores the guidelines that govern them. We examine the sound systems through which language is expressed and discover how these bits of sound are structured into word-like and sentence-like units. Students are introduced to a wide variety of natural language phenomena drawn from languages not only closely resembling English but also many which appear to be quite different, such as those native to the Americas, Africa, Australia and the South Pacific. Special emphasis is placed on phonology (how sounds are arranged into words), morphology (how prefixes and suffixes attach to words), syntax (how words are arranged into sentences), and semantics (how meaning is derived from sentences).

1.1 Goals

This class aims to do several things. One goal of this course is to provide an introduction to the basic methodology and results of modern linguistics. This means that it will provide you with a beginning understanding of how human language works and a basic knowledge of the properties that languages share. We'll focus on developing, evaluating, and improving hypotheses about the language user's unconscious linguistic knowledge. This class should prepare you for further coursework in linguistics.

1.2 General education requirements

This course fulfills the Analytic Reasoning (R2) requirement of the General Education curriculum. A large part of what you'll be doing in this course involves finding patterns in natural language data, making generalizations about that data, and constructing a sound logical argument. Skills such as working through complex data and forming abstract generalizations are applicable far beyond linguistics, and one of the goals in this class is to help develop these skills.

2 Discussion sections

There are mandatory discussions in this course. These are scheduled on Fridays and occur in lieu of lecture on that day. These are the times they are held:

Section	TA	Time	Room
A	Rong	1:25 PM – 2:15 PM	Hasbrouck Lab 242
B	Michael	1:25 PM – 2:15 PM	Hasbrouck Lab Add 111
E	Alex	11:15 AM – 12:05 PM	Hasbrouck Lab Add 113
F	Chris	11:15 AM – 12:05 PM	Hasbrouck Lab Add 104A
J	Alex	12:20 PM – 1:10 PM	Hasbrouck Lab Add 104B

3 Textbook

There is no assigned textbook for this course! Readings and other resources will be available on Moodle. Both reading and homework assignments will be drawn primarily from the following texts:

- *Language Files*, Various Editions. Ohio State University Press
- Fromkin, Victoria, Robert Rodman, and Nina Hyams. 2007. *An Introduction to Language*. Boston: Wadsworth Publishing.
- O'Grady, William, John Archibald, Mark Aronoff, and Janie Rees-Miller. 2010. *Contemporary Linguistics: An Introduction*, Sixth Edition. Boston: Bedford St. Martins.

Interested students should feel free to find these books if they are curious about the material, but be forewarned: The content of these books *will* deviate from (or even contradict) what we do in class!

4 Course Requirements

4.1 Homework

Your grade in this course will be based primarily on homework assignments. These assignments will not only assess material that has previously been covered in class, but will also introduce new problems that will drive discussion forward. These assignments will not usually be lengthy and will generally be assigned weekly in order to help both us and you assess your progress in the course.

Homework will normally be assigned on Wednesday and will be due the following Monday. We will try to return your work in section on the following Friday. You must hand your work in on paper, in class. If you need to send an assignment by email, please make arrangements with your TA beforehand.

In this course, your TA will be in charge of grading your work, although Nick will occasionally grade some assignments as well. This means that in general, if you have any issues or questions about grading, late work, or anything related to assignments, you should talk to your TA first.

Each assignment will be out of 20 points, and there will be a total of twelve at the end of the semester. Thus, there is a total of 240 homework points.

4.2 Reading

You will be asked to do occasional reading assignments to supplement class lectures. Reading assignments will be made available on the website.

4.3 Exams

There will be two exams in this course. The purpose of the exams is to ensure that you are learning the material and can recall and apply concepts introduced in this class without outside help.

Each exam will be divided three multiple parts, and each part will be equivalent to the value of one homework assignment. Thus, each exam will be worth **60** points, for a total of **60** points. There will be an array of question types on the exams: multiple choice, short answers, and problem sets. *The second exam will not be cumulative*, but you can expect it to be longer than the first.

You will not be able to refer to your notes or other course materials during the exams, nor will you be able to confer or collaborate with other students. If you **cheat** during an exam, you will receive a grade of **0**.

As with turning in late homework assignments, please make arrangements with us if you are unable to take exams on the scheduled dates. You will need to let us know at least one week in advance if you need to reschedule.

4.4 Attendance & participation

Attendance in this lectures is not mandatory and does not count directly toward your grade. However, since there is no textbook and since lectures and material distributed in class will form the basis for homework and exams, you will find it very difficult to do well in this class if you do not attend regularly.

Attendance in discussion sections is mandatory, and the TAs will be taking attendance. *New material will be introduced in sections*, and missing them will put you at a great disadvantage. Section attendance will count toward your grade with the value of two homework assignments (or **40** points).

We will expect you to participate in discussions, to answer questions, and to ask questions yourself. You should do this – it is a chance to seek clarification and to test new ideas before you are responsible for them on an assignment or an exam.

4.5 Grading

As discussed above, assignments will receive grades based on a twenty-point scale:

Points	Percentage	Grade
18.5 – 20.0	93% – 100%	A
18.0 – 18.5	90% – 92%	A-
17.5 – 18.0	87% – 89%	B+
16.5 – 17.5	83% – 86%	B
16.0 – 16.5	80% – 82%	B-
15.5 – 16.0	77% – 79%	C+
14.5 – 15.5	73% – 76%	C
14.0 – 14.5	70% – 72%	C-
13.5 – 14.0	67% – 69%	D+
12.0 – 13.5	60% – 66%	D
00.0 – 12.0	0% – 59%	F

Each exam counts as three assignments, and section attendance counts as two assignments. With the 12 assignments, this works out to a total of **400** possible points in the course.

	12	×	20	=	240	Assignments	(60%)
+	2	×	60	=	120	Exams	(30%)
+	1	×	40	=	40	Attendance	(10%)
					400	Total	

Final grades will be calculated by averaging over these grades. A student with an average less than **12/20** (*i.e.* fewer than **240/400** points) should expect a failing grade in the course.

In addition to the number grades, assignments will be returned with written comments to tell you where you did well, where you need improvement, and to explain the final grade. You are expected to read these comments.

4.5.1 Late work

Late work will not be accepted without prior arrangements. Work not turned in on the due date will receive a grade of **0/20**. It does not take many zero grades to drag your grade down, so you should always turn your work in on time.

You should notify Nick and your TA at least one week ahead of time of any university-related sports travel or games, religious observances, or any other extenuating circumstance recognized by the university. Exceptions to this policy will be made for medical and personal emergencies. You should be prepared to provide documentation for any medical excuses.

If you think that you will not be able to get an assignment in on time for any other reason, please talk to Nick or your TA *before* the deadline and we can try to make other arrangements.

4.5.2 Collaboration & working together

In this course, you are encouraged to work together on assignments. Since it is often completely new, students sometimes find the material difficult when they attempt to do it on their own. Many report that they understand the material better when they talk to other students about it. Therefore, you should work with others as you engage with the material and the assignments.

That said, the work you turn in *must be your own*. You may take your own notes while you work on an assignment with others, but *you may not, under any circumstances, have somebody else's homework in front of you when you write up your assignment!* Doing so is considered cheating and will be dealt with as a case of academic dishonesty ([see below](#)).

It is easy to avoid this:

- Do not write your assignment while working with others; instead take notes and write it up separately.
- Do not reference other students' work when you write up your assignment.
- Write your assignments in your own words.
- Do not let other students see your work when they write up their assignments.
- *Clearly indicate on your assignment who you collaborated with.*

Remember that something as simple as discussing your notes with another student counts as collaboration.

A word of advice: Do not depend too heavily on those you work with. You must learn how to deal with the material yourself, as you will not be able to work with others during exams.

4.6 Extra credit

There will be chances for extra credit in this course. These will generally come in the form of bonus questions or problems on assignments and exams. You will also be able to sign up to take experiments in the linguistics department, and credit earned from that may be applied to this course.

5 Communication

You should feel free to communicate with Nick or any of the TAs if you have any questions or concerns about the course. All of our emails are listed on the first page, as are our office hours. If you cannot make these hours, for whatever reason, you can schedule an appointment at a different time.

5.1 Getting help

We want every student to do well in this course. If you find you are having trouble or you think you are falling behind, please get in touch with your TA or with Nick. And don't put it off! The longer you wait, the harder it will be to get back on track.

6 Academic Honesty

We take cheating very seriously. Cases of suspected cheating or plagiarism will be handled in accordance with the University's policy on academic honesty, which can be found at:

<http://www.umass.edu/honesty/>

For a first-time offense, students caught cheating on an exam or an assignment (*and any collaborators*) may receive a zero grade on that assignment and will be reported to Academic Honesty Office. A similar policy applies to exams. Repeat offenders will fail the course.

7 Calendar

This is a rough outline of the course. Subject to change if necessary!

Week	Dates	Topics & Notes
1	Sept. 7, 9	Introductions
2	Sept. 12, 14, 16	Fields of Linguistics; Linguistic Descriptivism
3	Sept. 19, 21, 23	Phonetics
4	Sept. 26, 28, 30	Phonetics
5	Oct. 3, 5, 7	Phonetics & Phonology
6	Oct. 11, 12, 14	Phonology; Oct. 10 is a Holiday; We meet Oct. 11
7	Oct. 17, 19, 21	Phonology
8	Oct. 24, 26, 28	Phonology; Review; Exam 1 Oct. 28!
9	Oct. 31, Nov. 2, 4	Morphology & Phonology
10	Nov. 7, 9	Morphology of English (Nov. 11 is a holiday.)
11	Nov. 14, 16, 18	Morphology; Syntax (Nov. 16 is Friday schedule!)
12	Nov. 21, 23	Syntax; Happy Thanksgiving!
13	Nov. 28, 30, Dec. 2	Syntax
14	Dec. 5, 7, 9	Syntax
15	Dec. 12, 14	Slippage/TBA; Review
FW	Dec 21	Exam 2, 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM