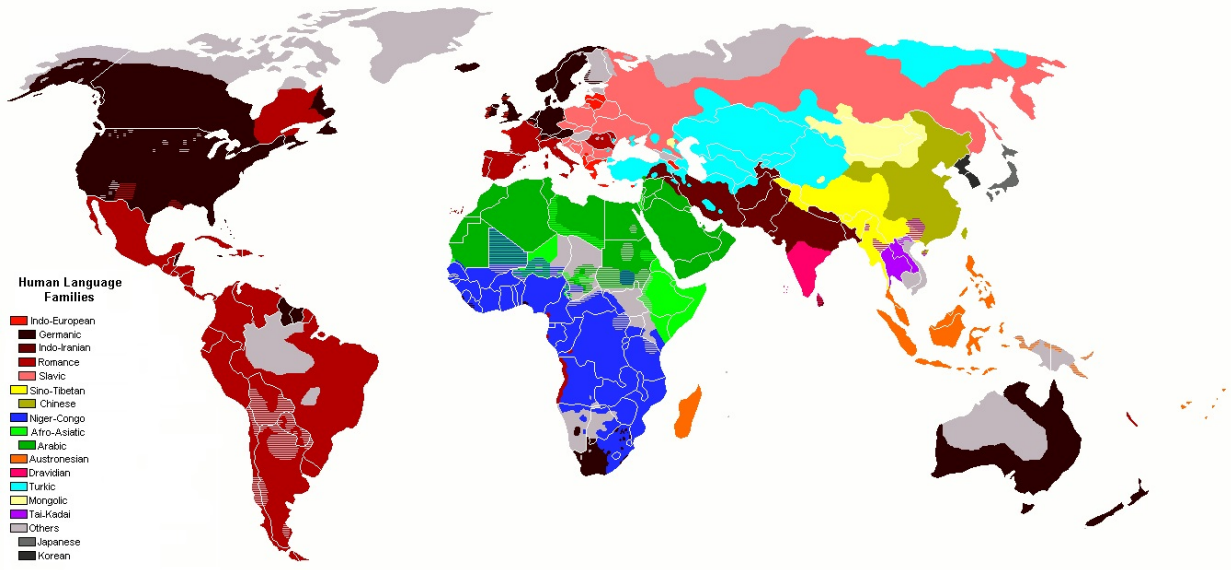
LING 242-1 (5918)

Languages of the World



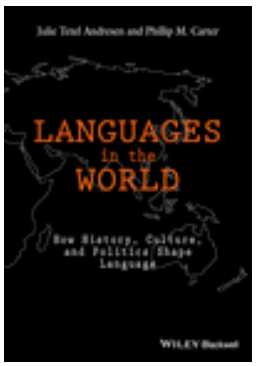
Course Information

🕐 **Class Meetings:**	TuTh 11:30 a.m.–12:45 p.m.
🗓️ **Class Dates:**	August 28th–December 9th
🏫 **Class Location:**	Oxford Science Building - 415
🎓 **Units:**	3

Instructor Information

👩🏻‍💼 **Instructor:**	Nicole Casin De Los Reyes *Call me **Dr. De Los Reyes***
📧 **Contact Information:**	nicole.casin.de.los.reyes@emory.edu *I try to respond to course-related questions within **24 hours** Monday through Friday. If you don't get a response within 48 hours, email again.*
💼 **Office Hours:**	Wednesdays (time TBD)

Required Materials



Tetel Andresen, J., & Carter, P. M. (2016). *Languages in the world: How history, culture, and politics shape language*. John Wiley & Sons. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781394260805

https://search.libraries.emory.edu/catalog/9937606299102486

Lyovin, A., Kessler, B., & Leben, W. (2017). *An introduction to the languages of the world* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.

The Oxford College Library will have an eBook available.

Course Description

In this course, you will explore a diverse range of the world's languages and develop the analytical tools and terminology needed to examine them. Our topics include genetic, areal, typological, and functional classifications of languages, as well as how historical, cultural, and political forces shape languages. We'll delve into patterns and exceptions across languages (typology and universals), core sound and structural features, and writing systems. We'll take a global perspective, drawing examples from every major region and analyzing these dynamics through the lenses of power, movement, and time. Along the way, you will encounter fascinating features rarely found in English, such as vowel harmony, click sounds, noun incorporation, and ergative-absolutive alignment. We'll also engage with broader themes through reading and discussion, including the 'language loop' (how language connects to human cognition, culture, and our environment), as well as general principles of language structure, the links between language and culture, and the ethical dimensions of working with understudied and endangered languages.

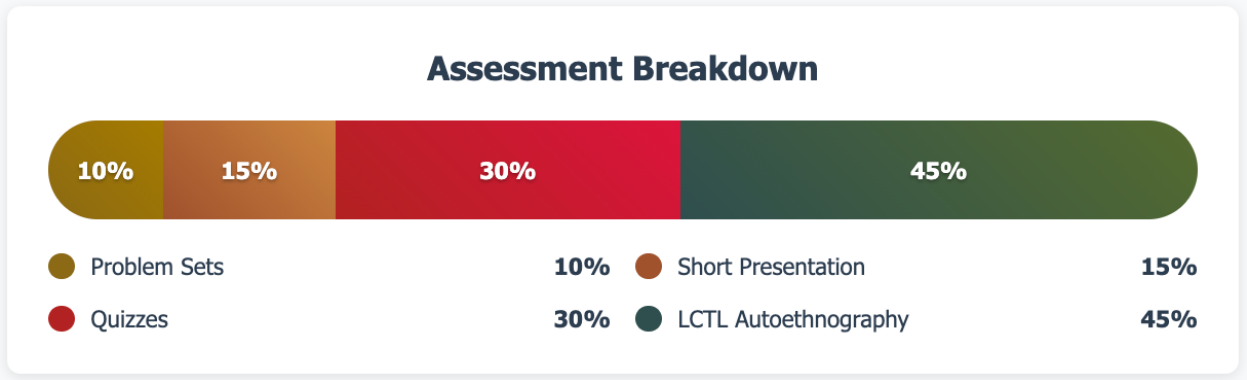
Learning Goals

I designed this course to spark your intellectual curiosity about language and its relationship to human experience. Through active and earnest engagement with course lectures, materials, and assessments, you will develop a greater interest and appreciation for both the diversity and commonalities of human languages, while simultaneously developing a generalizable skill set in analyzing linguistic data.

You will work toward three interrelated learning goals:

1. **Develop a broad, evidence-based understanding** of the world's major language families, exploring their global distribution through maps and linguistic profiles, and identify common structural patterns that connect or distinguish them.
2. **Analyze fundamental linguistic structures, including** sound systems, how words are formed, and basic sentence construction, across a variety of languages, thereby developing a foundational skill set in linguistic data analysis.
3. **Engage thoughtfully and respectfully with key issues in linguistic diversity**, including the global challenge of language endangerment and revitalization efforts, the development and unique status of creole languages, the profound connections between language, identity, and culture, and foundational ideas such as linguistic relativity and the concept of universal grammar.

Assessments and Grade Distribution



Problem Sets (10%)

You'll complete four problem sets during the semester, each scored on a 5-point scale. Some sets will include both easier and more advanced sections, allowing flexibility for students with different levels of background knowledge. Collaboration is welcome—feel free to talk through problems with classmates—but you must list anyone you worked with at the top of your submission and write your answers entirely on your own. That means no copying, even if you solved problems together.

Short Presentation (15%)

For this brief, 8-minute presentation (5 minutes for your remarks + 3 minutes for Q&A), you will introduce your peers to a language that may be new to them, either individually or in pairs, drawing from the 'Language Profiles' or 'Sketches' found in our course readings. Your presentation should spotlight one particularly interesting grammatical feature of your chosen language. Think about what makes this feature stand out based on the language(s) you already speak. Perhaps it challenges your assumptions about how language works, or it highlights a unique way speakers organize their thoughts or describe the world. The goal is not a deep, exhaustive linguistic analysis, but rather to share an aspect of human language diversity in an accessible and engaging way, sparking curiosity in your classmates.

Quizzes (30%)

Content Quizzes (3)

You'll take three fact-based, short in-person quizzes throughout the semester (check the Canvas calendar for specific dates). Each quiz will

primarily consist of multiple-choice questions, with 1-2 short-answer questions. These quizzes will encourage you to solidify your understanding of the core concepts and information presented in the textbook readings and lectures, ensuring you stay engaged with the material and reinforce your learning. To prepare effectively, you should focus on understanding and recalling foundational linguistic concepts and key characteristics, including:

- Key linguistic terminology and classifications
- Characteristics of major language families and individual languages
- Significant social, cultural, and historical factors that influence language diversity and change

These quizzes will help you build a robust conceptual framework for appreciating the incredible diversity and commonalities of human language.

Reading and Video Quizzes (2)

On two predetermined days (check the calendar in Canvas), we'll discuss a textbook reading and video. You'll need to complete (read and/or watch) that material before class. Before the discussion, you'll take a quick quiz on Canvas (5 points each, 10 points total).

Final Project: LCTL Learning Autoethnography (45%)

For your final project, you will embark on a semester-long journey learning a Less Commonly Taught Language (LCTL) while reflecting on this experience through the lens of your own linguistic background. Autoethnography refers to using one's own experiences as a lens to understand broader patterns in language and culture. This autoethnography project combines hands-on language learning with academic research to deepen your understanding of language acquisition, cultural context, and your own position as a language learner.

Throughout the semester, you'll document your language learning process, applying concepts from our course readings to your personal experience. You'll explore not just the grammar and vocabulary of your chosen language, but also the historical, political, and cultural contexts that shape its speakers' communities. This project allows you to experience firsthand the challenges and rewards of learning an LCTL while developing skills in autoethnographic reflection and academic writing, drawing on college resources such as the Oxford College Library and the Writing Center.

A complete list of eligible LCTL options is available at https://wisc.pb.unizin.org/lctlresources/.

Feedback and Grading Scale

Feedback

You can expect grades for assignments submitted on time to appear in Canvas within about a week. Late submissions may take longer to grade. I'll provide feedback in a variety of ways–sometimes through Canvas SpeedGrader, sometimes in class announcements, on the assignment itself, or through posted answer keys on Canvas.

Extra Credit

Some quizzes and problem sets will include extra-credit questions. Please note that extra-credit opportunities are offered to the entire class, not created individually for each student.

Late Work

If you find yourself falling behind, reach out as soon as possible—I'm here to help! You don't need to provide documentation or a long explanation, unless you want to. For problem sets, I usually offer a **24-hour extension** with no penalty if you request it before the due date. Other assignments may be less flexible, but there's often a way to make up at least part of the credit. If I don't hear from you, late work will be penalized **10% per day**—so don't hesitate to get in touch.

Grading Scale

I will submit final grades according to the following scale:

		A	93-100	**A-**	90-92	**F**	Below 60
B+	87-89	**B**	83-86	**B-**	80-82		
C+	77-79	**C**	73-76	**C-**	70-72		
D+	67-69	**D**	60-66				

A Note on Grade Rounding: If you are .5 (or less) away from the next letter grade, I will round up your grade.

One Last Note on Grades

If no one has told you this before, the grades you earn in this class do not reflect how I feel about you as a person, or how capable, smart, or thoughtful I think you are. They reflect the work you've submitted—its completeness, quality, and timeliness. If you're unsure about how to improve your performance, please send me an email and we'll meet to discuss it further.

Grade Appeals

To appeal a grade, please wait **48 hours** after the assessment is first returned to the class, whether electronically or in person. Within the timeframe noted below, please submit via email your reasons for believing your grade is incorrect, along with the original work in dispute, so that I can review it. Upon review, your grade may remain the same, may increase, or may decrease.

I will only consider appeals if you submit them within **48 hours** after I return the assessment to the class, and no later than **one week** after the assessment is returned to you. After this timeframe elapses, all grades are final and will not be adjusted. If you do not pick up or review graded work within the specified timeframe, your eligibility to contest the grade will expire.

Class Expectations, Policies, and Resources

Absences

Don't come to class if you are feeling sick or have a fever. If you must miss part or all of a class due to illness or any other reason, it's courteous to let me know. You don't need to tell me your reasons (although you're welcome to). I'll post handouts, slides, and other materials on Canvas after each session, and I'll be happy to address specific questions after you've had a chance to review them. For prolonged absences, missed assessments, or more serious situations, please email me ASAP so we can determine the next steps.

Religious Holidays

If you require academic accommodations for religious observances, please submit your requests to me as soon as possible. If you have questions or

concerns about your request, please contact the College Chaplain, Rev. Lyn Pace (ppace@emory.edu, Oxford Student Center, Room 224), the Ombuds Office, or the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC). Remember that accommodations for religious observance don't relieve you of responsibility for completing any coursework you may miss as a result of a religious observance. You can find Emory's official list of religious holidays at https://www.religiouslife.emory.edu/about_us/holidays.html.

Emergencies

I will always consider true emergencies and extenuating circumstances beyond your control. In such circumstances, please contact the Advising Support Center (ASC) as soon as possible. They will help you document your situation and inform your professors about it so we can work together to find a solution that works for everyone involved. Communication is key, so please don't hesitate to reach out to ASC and me.

Department of Accessibility Services

If you have a documented disability and anticipate barriers related to the format or requirements of this course, or think you may have a disability (e.g., mental health, attention, learning, vision, hearing, physical, or systemic), I encourage you to contact the Department of Accessibility Services (DAS) to learn more about the registration process and steps for requesting accommodations at accessibility@emory.edu.

If you're already registered with DAS and haven't requested or received a copy of your accommodation notification letter, please notify DAS immediately at accessibility@emory.edu.

If you have accommodations in place, please coordinate with me by the second week of the semester to discuss specific course-related needs that align with your approved accommodations.

I can't implement accommodations until you provide an accommodation letter, and we've met to discuss your accommodation plan for this course. I will not implement accommodations retroactively.

For additional information regarding DAS, please visit their website at https://accessibility.emory.edu/students/index.html.

Honor Code

The Honor Code applies to all assignments, in and out of the classroom. All work in this course must be entirely your own and original for this course in this semester. For more information, visit: https://oxford.emory.edu/catalog/regulations/honor-code.html.

Use of Artificial Intelligence for Assignments

Unless I explicitly state otherwise, using ChatGPT or other AI programs to generate content you submit for credit or evaluation in this course is prohibited.

Recordings and Other Materials

Class recordings, slides, and other course materials are for your education and that of your classmates. You can't share, screen capture, or record this content unless you have approved accommodations with DAS or I state otherwise. Sharing materials without my permission violates the Honor Code and may also violate other state and federal laws, such as the Copyright Act.

Writing & Communication Center

The Oxford Writing & Communication Center (OWCC) helps students grow as flexible communicators and thinkers. The OWCC supports students working on all forms of communication—whether for academic, professional, public, or personal purposes—through individual consultations, college-wide workshops, and an on-site library of resources. The peer consultants are trained to help with writing, presentations, or multimodal assignments for any class. They're available at any point in the process, from brainstorming to argument development to polishing. The OWCC is located in Pierce Hall 117, and appointments are recommended but not required. For more information, please visit their website at https://inside.oxford.emory.edu/academics/writing-center/index.html.

Course Schedule

This Course Schedule provides a general plan for the course. Deviations may be necessary.

LIW = *Languages in the World*, AITLOW = *An Introduction to the Languages of the World*

Week	Session		Topic	Chapter & Section	Homework
				LIW § "Language Profile X AITLOW § "Sketch of X"	**Text**: "Sketch of X" in AITLOW **Text**: "Language Profile X" in LIW
1	Th	8/28	⇒ What does LING 242 teach?	N/A	
2	Tu	9/2	⇒ What is language? ⇒ How many languages are there?	LIW Ch. 1 All Languages Were Once Spanglish	
	Th	9/4	⇒ How does language connect us to culture and cognition? ⇒ Does language shape how we think?	LIW Ch. 2 The Language Loop Boroditsky (2012)	
3	Tu	9/9	⇒ What is my Final Project? ⇒ How do linguists classify world languages?	LIW Ch. 3 Linguistics and Classification	
	Th	9/11	⇒ Why classify languages genetically and typologically? ⇒ How can the Oxford College Library support my Final Project?	AITLOW Ch. 1 Classification of Languages	**Problem Set 1** (**Due**: **Sunday, 9/14, 11:59 p.m.**) **Final Project: Language Selection** (**Due**: **Sunday, 9/14, 11:59 p.m.**)

4	Tu	9/16	⇒ How do nation-states enforce "one language" ideologies?	📖 LIW Ch. 4 Effects of the Nation-State and the Possibility of Kurdistan	
	Th	9/18	⇒ How are writing systems classified? ⇒ How do religion and writing intersect with political power?	📖 AITLOW Ch. 2 Classification of Writing Systems (pp. 31–50) 📖 LIW Ch. 5 The Development of Writing in the Light of Religion and Politics	📩 **Problem Set 2** **(Due: Sunday, 09/21, 11:59 p.m.)**
5	Tu	9/23	📝 **Quiz 1 (Weeks 1-4)** ⇒ What are Europe's major language families?	📖 AITLOW Ch. 3 Europe	
	Th	9/25	⇒ How do states control language through planning and law?	📖 LIW Ch. 6 Language Planning and Language Law Shaping the Right to Speak	🌐 **Short Presentation (Russian, Finnish, Kurdish, Tamil)** **(Due: Submit PPT by 9/24, 11:59 p.m.)**
6	Tu	9/30	⇒ What are Asia's diverse language families?	📖 AITLOW Ch. 4 Asia	🌐 **Short Presentation (Mandarin Chinese, Classical Tibetan, Tibetan, Vietnamese)** **(2 presenters; Due Submit PPT by 9/29)**
	Th	10/2	⇒ How do historical linguistics reveal language dispersal?	📖 LIW Ch. 7 A Mobile History: Matching Language Stocks and Families	🌐 **Short Presentation (Mandarin Chinese, Classical**

					Tibetan, **Tibetan**, **Vietnamese**) **(2 presenters; Due: Submit PPT by 10/01)** 📩 **Final Project: One-on-one research appointment with Paige Crowl (Due: Sunday, 10/5, 11:59 p.m.)**
7	Tu	10/7	⇒ What characterizes Afro-Asiatic languages?	📖 AITLOW Ch. 5 Africa (Section 5.1 Afro-Asiatic)	
	Th	10/9	⇒ How did colonization reshape world languages?	📖 LIW Ch. 8 Colonial Consequences: Language Stocks and Families Remapped	📩 **Problem Set 3 (Due: Sunday, 10/12, 11:59 p.m.)** 🌐 **Short Presentation (Arabic) (Due: Submit PPT by 10/8, 11:59 p.m.)**
8	Tu	10/14		🍂 **No Class - Fall Break** 🍂	
	Th	10/16	⇒ How are Africa's languages classified?	📖 AITLOW Ch. 5 Africa (Sections 5.2–5.5 Nilo-Saharan, Niger-Congo, Khoisan area, Other languages in Africa)	🌐 **Short Presentation (Swahili; !Xóõ) (Due: Submit PPT by 10/15, 11:59 p.m.)**
9	Tu	10/21	📝 **Quiz 2 (Weeks 5-8)** ⇒ Catch-up		
	Th	10/23	⇒ What are Oceania's principal language groups?	📖 AITLOW Ch. 6 Oceania	🌐 **Short Presentation (Hawaiian, Dyirbal) (Due: Submit PPT by 10/22, 11:59 p.m.)**

10	Tu	10/28	⇒ How do indigenous communities maintain language as cultural identity? ⇒ What are North America's indigenous language families?	📼 Native America Episode 4: Language is Life 📖 AITLOW Ch. 7 North American area (Sections 7.1–7.13)	🌐 **Short Presentation (Central Alaskan Yup'ik)** (**Due**: Submit PPT by 10/27, 11:59 p.m.)
	Th	10/30	⇒ What linguistic secrets do Amazonian languages reveal? ⇒ What defines Mesoamerican and South American languages?	📼 The Amazon Code 📖 AITLOW Ch. 7 Mesoamerican area & South American area (Sections 7.14–7.25)	🌐 **Short Presentation (Ayacucho Quechua, K'iche')** (**Due**: Submit PPT by 10/29, 11:59 p.m.) 📩 **Problem Set 4** (**Due**: Sunday, 11/2, 11:59 p.m.)
11	Tu	11/4	⇒ What processes define language birth, death, and revival?	📖 AITLOW Ch. 8 Language Birth, Death, and Revitalization	
	Th	11/6	⇒ How does globalization affect language endangerment and revitalization? ⇒ Final Project Workshop	📖 LIW Ch. 12 The Imagined Future: Globalization and the Fate of Endangered Languages N/A	🌐 **Short Presentation (Tok Pisin)** (**Due**: Submit PPT by 11/5, 11:59 p.m.) 📩 **Final Project: Appointment with the Oxford Writing & Communication Center** (**Due**: Sunday, 11/9, 11:59 p.m.)
12	Tu	11/11	📝 **Quiz 3 (Weeks 9–11)**	🗣️ Presentations (2 students)	

	Th	11/13		🗣️ Presentations	
13	Tu	11/18		🗣️ Presentations	
	Th	11/20		🗣️ Presentations	
14	Tu	11/25	Final Project Workshop	🗣️ Presentations	
	Th	**11/27**		🦃 **No Class - Thanksgiving** 🦃	
15	Tu	12/2	Catch-up day/Special topic (TBD)	TBD	
	Th	12/4	Catch-up day/Special topic (TBD)	TBD	
16	Tu	12/9	Course wrap-up		📩 **Final Project** (**Due: Thursday, 12/11, 11:59 p.m.**)