

ANTH E-1179—Historical Linguistics, Ancient Inscriptions, & Archaeology (23644)

Spring 2012 — Dr. Marc Zender (mzender@tulane.edu) — Thursday night schedule

Online only — This course is a ‘re-broadcast’ of lecture videos filmed in Spring 2009. The complete set of lecture videos and lecture slides will be made available on the course website as soon as the first official lecture date, Thursday, January 27th, 5:30-7:30pm, EST. Thereafter you can either work ahead in the course as quickly as you like, or follow along at a more leisurely pace, tuning in on Thursday evenings and completing assignments according to the schedule on the following pages. Note, however, that the due dates given for exercises and exams are firm and fixed: you can work ahead of this schedule, turning in your work early, but you can't turn in materials after these dates. Any late exercises, exams, etc. will count as ‘missed’. No exceptions. Nonetheless, and despite the pre-recorded lectures, this class is intended to be as interactive as possible — I am available for course-related questions on the online forum and, for personal queries, via email. You can expect responses to either within 2-3 days.

I – Course Rationale: All languages change. For more than two hundred years, historical linguists have documented the similar ways in which sounds, grammar, and even word-meanings are prone to shift in the world's languages. By projecting these changes back into the past, historical linguists have been able to recover numerous lost languages — such as Proto-Indo-European, Proto-Mayan, Uto-Aztecan and others. In some cases, the data are sufficient to determine where and when these languages were spoken, and to reconstruct something of their speakers' beliefs and histories. Not infrequently, ancient inscriptions and other archaeological evidence have confirmed these reconstructions, providing still more remote vantages from which to cast our gaze backward.

Despite being an online course with re-broadcast lectures, we will take a ‘hands on’ approach to historical linguistics and have substantial interaction. You will gain practice in the reconstruction of ancient languages through the detailed comparison of their modern descendants. The online forum will allow you to ask questions of your fellow students and myself as you work through your assignments. Among other things, and coupled with the readings and lectures, your exercises and forum exchanges will shed substantial light on puzzling features of English: the heritage of numerous changes undergone by this language during the past millennium.

II – Textbook: Lyle Campbell, *Historical Linguistics: An Introduction*. Second edition. Cambridge, MIT Press. 2004. ISBN 978-0262532679. (Earlier edition ok.)

III – Additional Required Readings: These are described on the following pages, and are available for convenient download (in pdf format) from the class website.

IV – Class website: <http://isites.harvard.edu/k83982>

V – Grading: Your grade in this class will be based on active participation in the online forum (20%), four exercises due on the dates indicated on the following pages (20%), a takehome midterm exam (30%) and a takehome final (30%). Graduate students will have the same exercises and exams as undergraduates, but will be held to a higher standard, with longer and more substantial essay questions on the exams. Please note that all exercises and exams are *mandatory*; you cannot pass the course if you miss any of them, regardless of your grade on the exams.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Please remember that the online lectures are re-broadcast from the last time this course was offered in 2009. This means that due dates for exercises, exams and readings, and occasional mention of canceled lectures, &c., in the lecture videos often conflict with this year's schedule. For this reason, please refer to the schedule below for any and all questions about due dates, requirements, readings, &c. Please also try to read the assigned readings before watching the associated lectures. I've found that this tends to make the concepts stick better. And try not to tackle the associated exercises until after you've read the chapter and watched the lecture. Finally, note that all exercises, exams and papers must be uploaded to the appropriate online dropbox no later than 11:59pm (EST) on the date listed.

1—Thurs, Jan 26: Introduction

- Historical Linguistics and the Inevitability of Language Change
 - *Readings*: Campbell, Chapter 1 (pp. 1-10) and Aitchison (pp. 3-18)

2—Thurs, Feb 2: Sound Change

- Phonetics and Phonemics; Kinds of Sound Change; Directionality of Change
 - *Readings*: Campbell, Chapter 2 (pp. 16-52)
 - Exercise 1.4 (Campbell pp. 11-12) due in dropbox

3—Thurs, Feb 9: Borrowing

- Loanwords; Direction of Borrowing; Cultural Significance of Borrowing
 - *Readings*: Campbell, Chapter 3 (pp. 62-84)

4—Thurs, Feb 16: The Comparative Method

- History, Method and Theory of Linguistic Reconstruction; Proto-Languages
 - *Readings*: Campbell, Chapter 5 (pp. 122-167)
 - Exercise 5.3 (Campbell pp. 168-169 — Proto-Polynesian) due in dropbox

**Thurs, Feb 23 — no scheduled class or assignment (pre-midterm break)*

5—Thurs, Mar 1: Classification

- The World's Languages (and Language Families); Subgrouping
 - *Readings*: Campbell, Chapter 6 (pp. 184-210) and Fortson (pp. 1-15)
 - Exercise 6.6 (Campbell p. 210 — Polynesian subgrouping) due in dropbox
 - Receive takehome midterm instructions (course website)

6—Thurs, Mar 8: Takehome midterm due in online dropbox

**Thurs, Mar 15 — no scheduled class or assignment (Spring Break)*

7—Thurs, Mar 22: Models of Linguistic Change & 'Distant Genetic Relationships'

- How (and Why) do Languages Change? Debunking 'Nostratic' and 'Proto-World'
 - *Readings*: Campbell, Chapter 7 (pp. 211-224) and Chapter 13 (pp. 344-360)

8—Thurs, Mar 29: The Role of Written Records

- Philology; General Contributions of Decipherment to Historical Linguistics
 - *Readings*: Campbell, Chapter 14 (pp. 361-373)
 - *Exercise 14.1* (pp. 373-375) *due in dropbox*

9—Thurs, Apr 5: Linguistic Prehistory and Proto-Indo-European

- Proto-Indo-European and its Speakers
 - *Readings*: Campbell, Chapter 15 (pp. 378-420) and Fortson (pp. 16-45)

10—Thurs, Apr 12: Mayan

- Proto-Mayan; Decipherment of Maya Hieroglyphic Writing
 - *Readings*: Zender (n.d.) 'Mayan Subgrouping'

**Thurs, Apr 19 — no scheduled class or assignment (pre-final break)*

11—Thurs, Apr 26: Uto-Aztecan

- Proto-Uto-Aztecan; Decipherment of Aztec Hieroglyphic Writing
 - *Readings*: Zender (2008) 'One Hundred and Fifty Years of Nahuatl Decipherment', *PARI Journal* 8(4):24-37. <http://www.mesoweb.com/pari/journal/archive/PARI0804.pdf>

12—Thurs, May 3: Language Change: Progress or Decay?

- Course Summary; What does it all mean?
 - *Readings*: Aitchison, Chapters 15-17, pp. 217-260
 - *Receive takehome final instructions (course website)*

13—Thurs, May 10: Takehome final due in online dropbox