

Introduction to Linguistics

LING 20001

MWF 10:30-11:20

Stuart 102

Andrea Beltrama, Instructor
andremormora@uchicago.edu
Office Hours: M 11:30-12:30
and by appointment
010A Social Sciences

Hilary McMahan, TA
mcmahanh@uchicago.edu
Office Hours: W 1-2 pm
and by appointment
Rosenwald 229

Gallagher Flinn, TA
gflinn@uchicago.edu
Office Hours: Th 10:30-11:30
and by appointment
Harper Cafe

Course Description

Overview: This course is an introductory survey of linguistics, focusing on natural language phenomena and the methods used to understand them. We will address the following subdomains of linguistics during the course:

Phonetics The physical properties of language forms (e.g., sounds)

Phonology The psychological representation of language sounds

Morphology How language forms combine to form words

Syntax How words combine to form phrases and sentences

Semantics The meanings of words, phrases, and sentences

Pragmatics How sentences are used in context

Sociolinguistics How language is affected by *and affects* social context

Psycholinguistics How language interacts with cognition and reasoning

Goals: It might not come as a shock, but the goal of the course is to get some initial exposure to linguistics. While this will hardly provide any in-depth knowledge of specific phenomena, it will help you get a sense of the nature of linguistic phenomena, as well as their interaction with domains of human action such as cognition and social structure. Due to time constraints, we will jump around a bit and never spend too much time in one place. In doing so, we will adopt a hands-on approach to linguistic data while engaging with some (accessible!) scientific literature.

Prerequisites: None. In particular, this course presupposes no background in any particular language. Neither does becoming a professor in linguistics, for the record!

Course Requirements

Graded Components:

1. Attendance and participation in the class and section: 10%

Class and section attendance is mandatory. There are two sections for this course, one led by each of the two teaching assistants. You must register for one of these two. Participation both *in class* and *in section* is expected. In fact, it will be *required* at times.

2. Assignments 60%. They come in two flavors.

- (a) Problem sets. 7 assigned throughout the course (lowest graded will be dropped). The problem sets involve reasoning with novel natural language data, as well as drawing connections between the readings. However, some problem sets (in particular, the final problem set) will be worth more than others. The problem sets are posted on Chalk on Wednesdays and are due **in class the following Monday**. While you are welcome to collaborate on the assignments, you must write them up individually. **No late assignments will be accepted without an official note from your advisor.** Finally, I strongly encourage, but do not require, that you type up the problem sets. One easy way to do this is with typesetting software called L^AT_EX. This sort of program is widely used in many technical fields, and it has loads of advantages over word processors. There is a steep learning curve, but it's worth it!

To use L^AT_EX

- i. Choose an editor. I recommend starting at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparison_of_TeX_editors.
- ii. Install it.
- iii. Play around. A very simple template will be posted on Chalk.
- iv. Consult these websites for linguistics-specific questions:
 - <https://www.essex.ac.uk/linguistics/external/clmt/latex4ling/>
 - <http://www.ling.upenn.edu/advice/latex.html>
 - <http://www.linguistics.ubc.ca/latex>

- (b) On certain weeks (see syllabus) you will be assigned one or more research articles to read. The purpose of this assignment is to give you a chance to get familiar with *actual* examples of linguistic research.¹ The articles will be discussed in the class when the reading is due. Also, some questions in the problem sets and the exams will presuppose familiarity with the content of the papers. In sum, even though you won't be required to write response papers, you must do the readings.

3. Exams (two mid-terms and one non-cumulative final): 30%

¹**Important:** In some cases, it will be hard to understand everything in the paper. Keep in mind that this is perfectly normal! Just focus on the main argument and try to get the bottom line of the article.

Website: Slides from lecture, readings, assignments and the rest of the materials will be posted on Chalk. Please contact me if you don't have access to the website.

Textbook We won't really be following a textbook, but for general reference you can rely on *Contemporary Linguistics: An introduction* by William OGrady, John Archibald, Mark Aronoff, and Janie Rees-Miller, available on Amazon. Next to each week I put the chapter that covers our materials, but note that class discussion will diverge quite a bit from the book.

Research Awareness Requirement: Linguists conduct research using a variety of methods, including experimental techniques in a laboratory setting. Your research awareness component has two parts.

Part 1: During the course of this term, you must take part in at least one ongoing research study as part of the Linguistics Department human subject pool. Visit <http://uchicagoling.sona-systems.com> and request an account; you will then be able to view and sign up for ongoing studies.

Part 2: There are two ways you can fulfill the second part of the research awareness requirement: by participating in a second study, or by attending one of the many linguistics talks held during the quarter, such as a Linguistics Department colloquium, a talk in the satellite workshops (Language, Cognition, and Computation; Language Variation and Change; Semantics and the Philosophy of Language), or a talk presented at the Chicago Linguistics Society Conference (April 23-25). You will be required to write up a 2 page critical summary of the topic discussed. The best way to learn about upcoming talks is to subscribe to the Linguistics Departments mailing list, UCLinguist, at

<https://listhost.uchicago.edu/web/info/uclinguist>

You can also find the workshop, colloquia, and conference schedules online:

<http://linguistics.uchicago.edu/newsevents/>

<http://cas.uchicago.edu/workshops/semantics/>

<http://chicagolinguisticsociety.org/conf.html>

Tentative schedule

- Week 1: Overview. O'Grady Ch. 1
 - March 30: Introduction
 - April 1: Prescription vs description **Read:** Acocella, Pinker, Kamm
 - April 3: What is (a) language
- Week 2: Sounds. O'Grady Ch. 2-3
 - April 6: Phonetics I **Assignment 1 due**
 - April 8: Phonetics II
 - April 10: Phonetics III and Phonology

- Week 3: The units of sounds O’Grady Ch. 3
 - April 13: Phonology **Assignment 2 due**
 - April 15: Phonology
 - April 17: Morpho-phonology
- Week 4: The units of meaning. O’Grady Ch. 4
 - April 20: Morphology **Assignment 3 due**
 - April 22: Morphology
 - April 24: **Midterm 1** (Phonetics, Phonology and Morphology) **CLS 51!**
- Week 5: The structure of sentences. O’Grady Ch. 5
 - April 27: Syntax I **Assignment 4 due**
 - April 29: Syntax II
 - May 1: Syntax III featuring Gallagher Flinn)
- Week 6: Meaning. O’Grady Chapter 6
 - May 4: Semantics and Pragmatics I **Assignment 5 due**
 - May 6: Semantics and Pragmatics II
 - May 8: Semantics and Pragmatics III
- Week 7: Language and the mind
 - May 11: Psycholinguistics I **Read:** Noveck 2001 **Assignment 6 due**
 - May 13: Psycholinguistics II **Read:** Beltrama and Xiang 2014
 - May 15: **Midterm 2** (Syntax, Semantics, Pragmatics and Psycholinguistics)
- Week 8: Language and the social context
 - May 18: Patterns of variation **Read:** Labov 1967
 - May 20: Social meaning **Read:** Eckert 2003
 - May 22: Social information and perception **Read:** Niedzielski 1999
- Week 9: Interfaces!
 - May 25: **No class**
 - May 27: Deixis (featuring Hilary McMahan) **Assignment 7 due**
 - May 29: TBA (featuring Laura Staum Casasanto)

- Week 10: Wrap up
 - June 1: Revisiting the prescriptive/descriptive distinction **Read:** Cameron
 - June 3: Review
 - **Final exam:** Time and place designated for us by the registrar